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Gardens for the London child: the utilisation of gardens and nature for the physical, educational and psychological development of children in London 1850-1939

Gardens for the London Child: The Utilisation of Gardens and Nature for the Physical, Educational and Psychological Development of Children in London 1850-1939

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the ways in which gardens and nature were used to enhance the physical, educational and psychological development of children in London between 1850 and 1939. The research aims to demonstrate that although there are modern trends in utilising gardens and nature for the mental and physical development of children, such practices were, in fact, being developed over a century before.

The research methodology includes the extensive use of archival sources and site visits. As this topic has received little academic attention, secondary sources are limited, but where relevant these have been referred to. The research is organised into five main sections to illustrate the breadth of projects introduced during this period and these are public parks, literature and illustration, school gardens, nursery gardens and philanthropic gardens. These projects are placed within a historical and social context to account for some of the motivating factors in their creation.

The findings of the thesis reveal the progressive development of educationalists, authors, and the medical profession in realising the potential of the garden and nature to educate children between 1850 and 1939. The research confirms that the garden and nature were used extensively in a variety of projects to purposefully physically, educationally and psychologically develop children, as well as revealing the introduction of the concept of the role of pleasure and entertainment in education.

Acknowledgements

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Warm thanks go to my friends and family who have supported me over the last four years, particularly Dona, Charl, Janina, Jemma, Lois, Andy and Jill, Dan, Sagal, and of course Emma.

My final acknowledgment is to my children, Rose and 'Pip'. They have neither read a word of this thesis, nor have they offered any support or guidance. However, they were the inspiration and motivation for the research and were always there – even if I didn't realise it.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:.....DATE: ....19 November 2008

CONTENTS

1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In March 2007, an article was published in *The Telegraph* entitled, 'The Flower Children'. In it, the author Rosemary Creeser observed: 'More and more children are getting involved with gardening: at home, at school, on allotments and as part of community gardening schemes'.[1] Creeser further identified that, 'Gardening is now regarded as a good way for children to study different subjects across the curriculum, and if they grow fruit and vegetables in school grounds, it encourages them to learn about food and eat more healthily'.[2] Two years earlier, in July 2005, Michele Kirsch reported in *The Times* on the Green Ground Zero scheme in Hackney that was designed to encourage overweight children to exercise through gardening. By participating in the scheme, Kirsch claimed parents and their children were 'buying into the concept that gardening is the new keep fit'.[3] Kirsch further described gardening for children as being 'useful, educational, environmentally sound and slimming'.[4]

The use of the words 'new' and 'now' in these articles suggest that the concept of utilising gardens for the educational or physical benefit of children is a modern innovation. However, the author of this thesis strongly suspected that the potential of gardening and nature to develop children mentally and physically had been realised over a century ago and was utilised extensively during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to look back to the past to see whether, and to what extent, this was the case. Through extensive research for this thesis a great deal of original archival material has been sourced which clearly offers proof that gardening and nature were

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[1] Creeser, Rosemary, 'The Flower Children', *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 2007, p. 2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Kirsch, Michele, 'To Get Them Fit, Go Green', *The Times*, 20 July 2005, p. 8.
[4] Ibid.

purposefully and effectively used for the physical and educational development of children during the period 1850 to 1939.

1.2 Research Criteria and Explanation of Terms Used

The title and subject of this thesis is purposefully specific, and this is in large part due to the sheer volume of archival material that was revealed during the course of research and the obvious need to contain it in some way. The decision was taken to focus on London as it transpired that it was often the case that schemes started in the capital and then filtered outwards through the rest of the country. An example of this was Margaret McMillan's concept of the Open-Air Nursery School. Although McMillan developed the Open-Air Nursery School in London, the model was subsequently spread nationally and internationally by both visitors and those who trained as nursery nurses at the original Deptford-based school.

The 1850 to 1939 timeframe was selected as it became apparent during early research that this was the period that witnessed the most intensive and varied activity in utilising gardens and nature for children. Many schemes were introduced in the mid-to-late nineteenth century when Victorian philanthropy was at its height, for example the decorative ceramic tile panels in children's hospitals which predominantly featured images of gardens and nature. As the nineteenth century progressed and developed into the twentieth century, the State increasingly replaced the work and necessity of philanthropists. This shift culminated in the establishment of the Welfare State after the Second World War and these two major historic events certainly contributed to making many of the garden-related schemes redundant and therefore offered an obvious end point for this research.

As the research developed, a clear pattern emerged of gardens and nature being predominantly used during this period to develop children in three main areas. These have been classified within this thesis as physical, educational and psychological. 'Physical' encompasses not only the obvious physical act of gardening, but also the more abstract, an example of which is the effect garden imagery in ceramic hospital tile

panels proved to have on the physical recovery and health of a sick child. Almost every garden-related scheme or resource of this period had at its core an emphasis on being 'Educational' in that gardens and nature were purposefully used to facilitate the learning process which led to the children developing knowledge or acquiring a skill. The use of nature as an inter-disciplinary subject in the Open-Air School is one example, and many other examples will be explored in every chapter within this text. The third and final sub-division – 'psychological' - makes reference to the development of the children's mental processes and behaviour. The term 'moral' is also used within this sub-division and is generally applied to describe the distinction between wrong and right, as is demonstrated in Beatrix Potter's stories for young children which are explored in Chapter 3. It should be made clear that the terms 'psychological' and 'moral' are used in their twenty-first century context and not as may have been interpreted a hundred years ago.

Finally, it may be of assistance to the reader to have the terms 'nature', 'landscape' and 'gardens' defined as they are used within the context of this thesis. 'Nature' refers in general to the physical world and includes plants, animals and landscapes. The term 'Landscape' is used to describe an expanse of land in which the natural (for example earth, rocks, water) and the semi-natural (things that whilst looking like natural elements are the result of human intervention such as a man-made body of water) are prominent.[5] Finally, a 'garden' is an enclosed space that is cultivated in some way through, for example, the planting of crops or flowers.[6]

The main body of this thesis is divided into five chapters, each of which explores one key area that utilised the garden, nature or landscape to develop children. These are: the park and the London child; the representation of gardens and nature in children's literature and book

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[5] Goodchild, Peter H, *A Suggested Primary Definition of Landscape* (28 November 2006), www.icomos/fi/HUL_US-Goodchild2.pdf , p. 1.
[6] Symes, Michael, *A Glossary of Garden History* (Shire, 1993), p. 54.

illustration; the utilisation of gardens and nature in schools, particularly in the open-air school; the use of the garden in nurseries and the provision and utilisation of gardens for children by philanthropists. The subject matter of each of the chapters has been purposefully selected to be representative of the wide variety of ways in which gardens and nature were incorporated into the daily lives of many children during this period, from their time in school, at leisure or even when in hospital. Whilst parks and school gardens were obvious areas of research to focus on, it could be argued that the chapter on children's literature and book illustration has the least apparent connection to a thesis that has focused on London, gardens and children. Notwithstanding, this chapter has been included as it is clear that children living in London would have had exposure to such books through Sunday schools, libraries, gifts and schools. Furthermore, the Open-Air School curriculum recommended that, 'reading books that deal with open air life are preferred above all others'.[7] Also, as will be explored further in Chapter 3, it is possible that access to books that had nature as their main subject matter had the potential to develop children educationally or psychologically in a way that was complementary to the more hands-on experiences the child may have had whilst at school or in the park.

Without exception, every chapter within this study had the potential to be developed into a thesis in its own right. The amount of original archival material available and yet not researched is nothing short of staggering, as is the fact that the subject of children within the garden seems to date to have escaped the detailed attention of garden historians, as well as other academics. The main body of research has relied on original archive material, as there is very little secondary material written on the subject. Each chapter is based on a key area or theme, and the development of the innovations explored within each is chronological. Additionally, even though this thesis is primarily concerned with the discipline of Garden History, it has inevitably over-lapped into several

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[7] Broughton, Hugh, *The Open Air School* (Pitman, 1914), p. 180.

other academic areas including Horticulture, Garden Design, Literature, Social History, Medical History, Art History, Educational History and Educational Theory. As such, the research presented in this thesis will be of value not only to garden historians, but also to social, educational and medical historians as well as to researchers in the fields of English Literature and Garden Design. Furthermore, interest has already been expressed by those actively practicing in the areas of children's education and health – for example teachers at The Rachel McMillan Open-Air School and Chelsea Open-School - who are clearly ignorant and yet excited about the findings of this research.

Although the chapters purposefully examine a variety of ways in which nature and gardens were utilised between 1850 and 1939, there have inevitably been some omissions. The most obvious is detailed research on the home garden, although there are a number of reasons for this. Primarily, small, private home gardens are difficult to research, as they are often void of any archival material. Furthermore, within the densely populated areas of inner London, 'Gardens were an indulgence no landlord could afford. Most of them were transformed into roughcast unyielding grey concrete backyards'.[8] No doubt far away from the poverty and overcrowding of the East End of London that Harry Blacker described, even The Hon Mrs Evelyn Cecil had to acknowledge that, 'The rarest thing in London are the private gardens'. [9] The possible exception to this may perhaps be found in the establishment of Garden Cities or Suburbs, such as London's Hampstead Garden Suburb. However these have generally received much academic attention and whilst this does not seem to be particularly child-focused, it does not offer the unique research opportunities that many of the other chapters in this thesis did and so has been discounted. There are several other areas that have not been researched, but that are certainly worthy of further academic attention. These include general books on gardening for children, for

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[8] Blacker, Harry, *Just Like It Was: Memoirs of the Mittel East* (Blacker, Vallentine, Mitchell, 1974), p. 47.
[9] Amherst, Amelia (The Hon Mrs Evelyn Cecil), *London Parks and Gardens* (Archibald Constable & Co, 1907), p. 4.

example Gertrude Jekyll's *Children and Gardening* published in 1908;[10] art and design that depicts children in connection with gardens or nature such as Walter Crane's nursery wallpaper; and the relationship between gardens and the design of toys for children, fascinating examples of which were identified at both London's Pollock's Toy Museum and The Museum of Childhood. Finally, although some reference is made to the ways in which innovations in the period 1850 to 1939 have been continued or re-discovered today, it must be made clear that the purpose of this thesis is primarily to explore the developments of this period and not to offer a detailed analysis and comparison with current twenty-first century developments in the provision of gardens or education for children.

It should already be apparent that the period 1850 to 1939 was one of intense activity in respect of gardens and children related projects. However, before exploring these projects in more depth in the following chapters, it is fundamental to have at the very least a basic understanding of the historic and social context of the period. Consequently the latter part of this introductory chapter seeks to provide the reader with an overview of the period with reference to the political, economic, scientific and social developments of that time. It should, however, be noted that the constraints of this thesis permit only a brief and broad overview, but that where appropriate further detail will be given in subsequent chapters.

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[10] Jekyll, Gertrude, *Children and Gardens* (Country Life, 1908).

1.3 An Overview of Victorian and Edwardian Politics, Economic, Scientific and Social History

This period principally spans the reigns of two monarchs – Queen Victoria (1819-1901) and King Edward VII (1841-1910). With her nine children and forty-two grandchildren, Victoria's reign placed a strong emphasis on morality and family values. This was in direct contrast to her son, Edward VII, who was much less respectable than his mother with his love of 'beautiful women, shooting, horse racing and, in general, every pleasure diversion that society could offer'.[11] The characters of Victoria and Edward VII symbolise the many contradictions of this period - which included the cultivation of the appearance of dignity and restraint running alongside the prevalence of prostitution and child labour, and social movements that concerned themselves with improving public morals whilst also permitting harsh living conditions for many.[12] Nonetheless, it was a period of huge advances in nearly every area from scientific and technical advances to dramatic shifts in population growth and location and, most importantly in respect of this thesis, revolutions in the treatment and education of children.

The technical advances of this period, particularly those in agriculture, manufacturing and transport, were primarily due to the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in which fundamental changes occurred in agriculture, textile and metal manufacture and transportation. The Industrial Revolution was also responsible for Britain's successful import and export trade and consequential sense of confidence. It proved more viable to import foods and the export of manufactured goods such as coal, railways, and particularly cotton goods earned Britain the title of 'the workshop of the world'. By '1900 Britain was arguably the greatest power in the world',[13] and the City of London was the centre of the import/export trade, with sterling dominating the transactions This power, however, came at a cost.

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[11] Strong, Roy *Royal Gardens* (BBC Books and Conran Octopus, 1992), p.128.
[12] www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_morality (Victorian Morality)
[13] Clarke, Peter *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (Penguin, 1996), p. 3.

The agricultural industry declined dramatically during this period as food being imported from abroad resulted in a lack of employment in rural areas. Furthermore, industrialisation led to the creation of factories and towns which, with the attraction of better pay, resulted in the migration of families from the country to the city in search of work. At the start of the nineteenth century 25 per cent of the population lived in towns, but by the end of the century this figure had risen to 75 per cent. The result was that by the early twentieth century the United Kingdom was the most urbanised country in the world and London, with seven million residents, was the largest city on earth. To accommodate this mass migration into the cities, houses were built at enormous speed, often with no regard to either sanitation or the health of the occupants.[14] Living in such overcrowded, squalid conditions with neither clean water nor means of disposing of sewage inevitably resulted in the rife spread of killer diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, influenza and pneumonia. These diseases spread throughout the cities and affected all classes of society, although it was the poor who suffered most. The death or illness of a breadwinner could leave a family in dire poverty, as at the start of the nineteenth century there was no state unemployment or sickness benefit, and no free or adequate medical treatment. However, this was to change and 'From the 1860s new attitudes to social welfare slowly began to accompany the growth of democracy and the acceptance that the State had a broader responsibility to the individual'.[15]

During the nineteenth century, a large number of parliamentary acts were passed to improve the lives of the working class and their children. For example, the 1875 Public Health Act laid foundations that would last well into the twentieth century, requiring every area to have a Medical Officer and Councils being provided with the powers to build sewers, drains and public toilets as well as ensuring refuse was collected and taking responsibility for the control of the water supply. The link between the spread of disease and population density was also recognised from as

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[14] Murphy, D, Walsh-Atkins, P and Whiskerd, N, *Britain 1815-1895* (Collins, 2008), p. 180.
[15] Ibid., p. 106.

early as 1833 when the Select Committee on Public Walks presented its report to Parliament, which 'showed how greatly parks were needed physically, socially and politically'.[16] This clearly had a direct impact on reformers in London as steps to create Victoria Park in the East End, one of London's most densely and disease-ridden areas, were begun within six years as will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Despite some advances in reform, living conditions for the poor were still a major concern by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1899, Seebohm Rowntree conducted a house by house investigation of incomes in York, publishing his findings in *Poverty: a Study of Town Life*. This showed that ten per cent of the population were in dire need, whilst up to 30 per cent experienced some degree of poverty. Rowntree's findings were certainly backed up by photographic and written records of pupils at the Rachel McMillan Nursery School at the start of the twentieth century, where large families often lived in one room with little or no access to clean water and sanitation. One of the main influences to further reform in the twentieth century, and particularly that for children, was the Boer War.

When Edward VII ascended the throne Britain was in the middle of the second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa. The war started badly and early defeats fuelled growing concerns at home about the health and effectiveness of the soldiers who had enlisted. In 1899, three out of five men trying to enlist for the Boer War in Manchester were turned down due to physical unfitness. This was not a unique city. The government and nation were forced into a realisation that Britain was falling behind other powers, particularly Germany, which was emerging as a rival and a threat.

The Conservative Government (1895 to 1905) which led Britain into war had a cautious attitude towards domestic reform, but their Liberal successors (1906 to 1915) used war-inspired public pressure to their

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[16] Conway, Hazel, *Public Parks* (Shire, 1996), p. 5.

advantage by pledging a series of social reforms in their election addresses. Once in power, the Liberals progressively extended the provision of State Benefits for all ages of society. They made the registration of birth compulsory, provided education, school meals, and school medical inspections and introduced Maternity benefits, National Insurance, Labour Exchanges and pensions. The result was that family members were no longer reliant on one another for survival and, perhaps for the first time, children were recognised by the State and society.

1.4 Edwardian Children and Childhood

Throughout the course of this research the scarcity of secondary source material has clearly highlighted the lack of academic interest and research on children's history. One of the few children's historians of the period, Harry Hendrick, attributes the lack of research to the fact that historically children have been of little interest to either governments or historians, having neither the vote nor a political movement to represent them.[17] Children stand apart from other 'oppressed' classes (working classes, women, ethnic minorities) because childhood is a transitory stage that everyone experiences and, with the exception of premature death, will outgrow - unlike sex or colour. Any changes in attitude towards children come about not as a result of their demands or petitioning, but rather as a result of changes in the attitude of adults around them.

One of the main influences on changes towards children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was philanthropy. Hugh Cunningham, author of *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500,* charts the historic relationship between philanthropists and children's causes and identifies that this reached a new zenith in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cunningham attributes this to several social factors. The Boer war had highlighted the poor physical standards of the nation and this inspired an interest in the physical well-being of children who were seen to represent the future of the nature; it was relatively easy to 'tap the pockets of the public by a sentimental appeal on their [children's] behalf',[18] and child philanthropy was regarded as a suitable occupation for the newly established middle class woman.[19] Cunningham further establishes that during this period there was a shift in philanthropic work itself. Hitherto philanthropic work had focused on either saving the

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[17] Hendrick, H *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.
[18] Cunningham, Hugh, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Longman, 1995)
[19] Ibid., p. 136 making reference to Prochaska, F K, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 30-32 and 224-225

children's souls or their health through, for example, the establishment of Sunday schools to which Attendances reached a peak of over 6 million in 1906,[20] or the provision of free meals, clothing and clinics and hospitals for children such as Great Ormond Street Hospital that was established in 1851. However, from the period 1850 to 1939 philanthropy also interested itself to the innocence of children and the necessity of allowing them to enjoy their childhood and education. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more evident than at Margaret McMillan's nursery school where she sought to make the children's experiences in the outside garden, 'as rich as we can make it'.[21]

This shift to being concerned about children enjoying their childhood was largely inspired by the Romantic Movement, which instilled an idealisation of what this should be. Romanticism - a complex artistic, literary and intellectual movement that defies simple definition – originated in the second half of the eighteenth century and was at its height during the first half of the nineteen century. The Movement was in strong opposition to the Industrial Revolution and consequently the most important elements of it were a high regard for nature, an interest in the past and an emphasis on emotion and imagination as opposed to reason. Children were viewed as having a 'higher state of spiritual perception than adults',[22] and the Romantics believed that this spiritual perception should be encouraged and developed, particularly through their education. The inspiration for this primarily came from the theories of two men: Locke and Rousseau. The scientist and philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) suggested that children were individuals and consequently their education - which should include virtue, wisdom and physical exercise as well as conventional lessons - should take this into account. A century later, JJ Rousseau (1712-78), writer, philosopher and educationalist, advocated that children should learn through nature, as 'True education is

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[20] Burnett, John, *Destiny Obscure* p. 141 (citing source as Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture* 1976 p. 246).
[21] McMillan, Margaret, *The Nursery School* (Dent & Sons, 1919) p. 44.
[22] Carpenter, Humphrey, *Secret Gardens* (Unwin, 1985), p. 9.

simply the development of the original nature of the child'.[23] He, according to Cunningham,[24] was the first to suggest that childhood was the best time of life.

> Love childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts. Who has not sometimes regretted that age when laughter was ever on the lips, when the heart was ever at peace? Why rob these innocents of the joys which pass so quickly, of that precious gift which they cannot abuse? Why fill with bitterness the fleeting days of early childhood, days which will no more return for them than for you.[25]

The Romantics combined and adapted the theories of Locke and Rousseau, and consequently viewed children as blank canvases that nature would teach and nourish. They believed children had the ability to see beauty and truth with a freshness that declined as adulthood approached, and consequently,

> ...from being the smallest and least considered of human beings, the child has become endowed with qualities which make it Godlike, fit to be worshipped and the embodiment of hope.[26]

This hope was predominately developed through the decline of children in the work place and their increased presence and representation in the British education system. Social reformers, motivated by the cruelty and exploitation of children working in factories were instrumental in the adoption of The Factory Acts of 1833, 1844, 1847 and 1850 which gradually decreased the hours and increased the ages at which children could work. At the same time, compulsory education was provided for children. The 1870 Elementary Education Act laid the foundations of the elementary education system by guaranteeing every child a school place in a building of reasonable quality with a head teacher and raising the school leaving age to ten, which was raised to twelve in The 1899 Education Act and 14 in the 1918 Education Act.

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[23] Boyd, W & Kind, E, *The History of Western Education* (Adam and Charles Black, 1961), p. 296.
[24] Cunningham, p. 66.
[25] Ibid., quoting Rousseau *Emile*, p. 43.
[26] Ibid., p. 78.

By drawing pupils from the most deprived sectors of society into school, the 1870 Education Act brought to public and political attention the serious scale of childhood poverty, ill-health and physical handicap. Consequently there was a huge increase in the number of philanthropic projects and government Acts passed which affected the health and education of children. Children were offered protection by organisations such as the founding of National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1884 who were instrumental in the passing of the government's 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act and the 1908 Children Act which protected children from ill-treatment or neglect by their parents and outlawed child begging. In the same year, the 1908 Children's Charter established juvenile courts and recognised that people under the age of 14 were still minors who should not be tried in the same way as adults and should be reformed rather than punished. The 1906 Act allowed Local Education Authorities to feed schoolchildren if necessary and the 1908 Act gave all elementary pupils a medical inspection and treatment if it was found to be appropriate. 1908 also witnessed the foundation of the Boy Scout Movement and the Girl Guides two years later. Robert Baden-Powell, the Boer War hero, was, like so many, concerned about the decline in physical fitness revealed in the conflict and encouraged his Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to undertake physical exercise, based on army training with the aim of building a stronger nation, as is illustrated by the sub-title of the Girl Guides' handbook: *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire.*[27]

The passing of these Acts, together with an increase in child philanthropy and the impact of the Romanticism on pedagogy resulted in a new approach to education that was hugely influenced by nature and gardens. Leading the way in these new advances were Open-Air schools, which were first introduced by the London County Council, and Margaret McMillan's Open-Air Nursery School in the East End of London. Schools

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[27] Baden-Powell, Agnes in collaboration with Baden-Powell, Robert, *How Girls Can Help Build Up the Empire,* (Girl Guides Association, c. 1912).

such as these also tackled the problems of child poverty and ill-health by placing children in an outside setting and utilising nature to educate them. The Open-Air school in particular sought to offer a solution for children suffering from tuberculosis who had historically been excluded from schools. The medical development of the early twentieth in seeing a link between fresh-air and successfully treating tuberculosis was to play a crucial role in the provision of gardens and nature for children. Not only did it inspire the Open-Air Schools of London, but it also inspired the use of garden imagery on the walls of the children's wards and gardens and balconies in hospitals. Even in London outside space was utilised to treat the patients in the battle against one of the most prevalent and deadly diseases of the nineteenth century. The London Chest Hospital in Hackney, which was created on the periphery of Victoria Park, featured balconies which allowed patients twenty-four hour access to the fresh air provided by the park.

Although brief, this background history has clearly demonstrated the link between historical circumstances and the prevalence of garden and nature related schemes. It has illustrated that, motivated by the Boer War and the increased awareness of the effects of poverty and illness caused by extreme urbanisation, Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century underwent a period of intense social reform which particularly affected children as parents, teachers, medical professionals, philanthropists and politicians recognised that the future of the nation was in the hands of children and that their education and welfare needed to prepare them for this.

It is hoped that the research conducted in the following chapters will not only provide a further, more detailed insight into the historical relationship between children, gardens and education, but that it will also offer some inspiration and guidance as to the huge potential of the garden as an educational tool to educators today. During this research, it has become very apparent that many people – educationalists and medics alike – are oblivious to the work of their predecessors. It appears that there was a

very evident need to identify what has been done before, and that this information could be usefully utilised today.

2.0

VICTORIA PARK, HACKNEY: A CASE STUDY OF FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN IN LONDON'S PARKS 1845 - 1939

2.1 The History of Parks

One of the most obvious areas of research regarding the provision of gardens for children in London is public parks. The general history of parks has received surprisingly little attention despite being, as Hazel Conway, one of the main researchers on this subject, observes, 'a very rich subject, involving as it does social, economic and political history, recreation, landscape design, architecture, sculpture and the urban environment'.[28] Conway has produced a comprehensive history of parks in her two volumes: *People's Parks* (1991) and *Public Parks* (1996). In these she traces the increased public accessibility of royal parks as well as the creation of public parks from the mid-nineteenth century by philanthropists and government. Conway observes that these Victorian municipal parks 'provided a source of fresh air, opportunities for financial investment, a means of diffusing social tensions and improving the physical and moral condition of the urban citizens, and an alternative to the public house and the pleasure garden'.[29] Although Conway mentions some of the features provided for children in parks,[30] this subject is certainly not explored in sufficient depth to provide any solid overview of the history of children in parks or the relationship between facilities provided for children and their education.

In stark contrast to the limited but comprehensive research on the history of parks in general, there is an abundance of books written on the history of London's parks. This is perhaps not surprising as 'few cities of the

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[28] Conway, H, *People's Parks* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 1.
[29] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[30] For example Conway, H, *Public Parks* (Shire, 1996), pp. 79-80 provides one paragraph on playgrounds.

world provide as much open space for nature and people as is found in London'.[31] In *London Parks and Gardens,* written in 1907, Alicia Amherst (also known as The Honourable Mrs Evelyn Cecil) captured the sentiment of the time towards parks in the capital:

> The parks and gardens of London form bright spots in the landscape. They are beyond the pale of controversy; they appeal to all sections of the community, to the workers as well as to the idlers, to the rich as well as to the poor, to the thoughtful as well as to the careless. From the utilitarian point of view they are essential. They bring new supplies of oxygen, and allow the freer circulation of health-giving fresh air. They are not less useful as places of exercise and recreation. They waft a breath of nature where it is most needed, and the part they play in brightening the lives of countless thousands cannot be over-estimated.[32]

The frontispiece to Amherst's book (Figure 1) clearly illustrates the abundance of parks and gardens located in London at the start of the twentieth century.

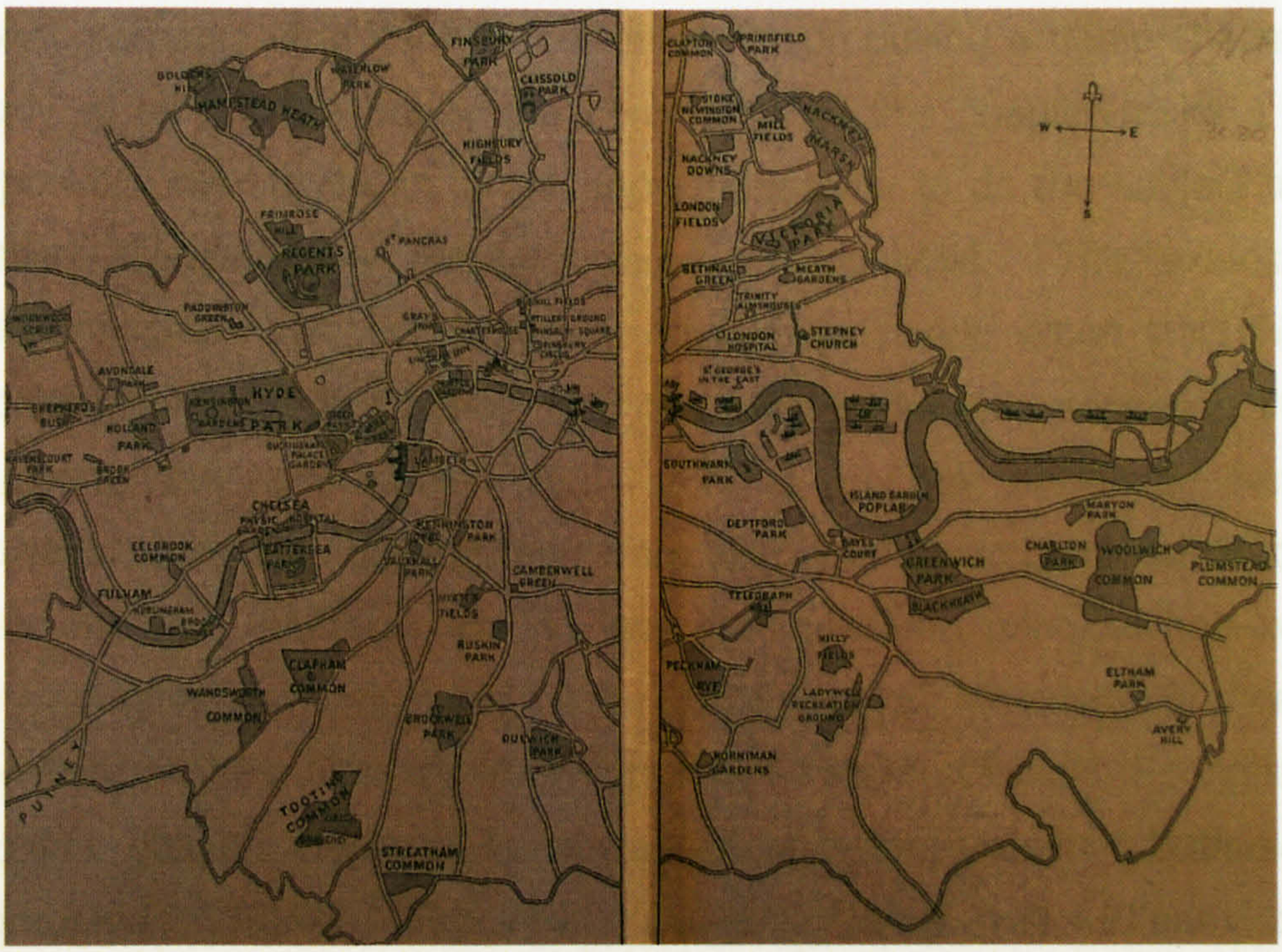

Figure 1: London's Parks and Gardens, 1907 (Source: Amherst, A, *London Parks and Gardens,* frontispiece)

Within her text, Amherst sub-divides the parks illustrated in her frontispiece into the two categories of royal parks and municipal parks,

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[31] Billington, Jill, *London's Parks & Gardens* (Frances Lincoln, 2003), p. 8.
[32] Amherst, p. 2.

the latter being those that were created and/or maintained by the London County Council.[33] These two categories provide a sensible starting place for researching London's parks.

Although the history of London's parks has continued to fascinate and interest researchers, the majority are drawn to the eight royal parks - namely St James's Park, Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, Greenwich Park, Richmond Park, Regent's Park and Bushy Park.[34] The non-royal parks, also referred to as municipal parks, have attracted comparatively little academic attention. Surprisingly books on the history of both the royal and municipal parks of London, as is the case with Conway, give little more than a passing mention at best to the facilities provided for children, and seemingly no explanation at all as to the reasons for their provision.

Whilst the lack of previous research on the facilities for children in London's parks is in itself a motivation for producing a comprehensive study of all London parks, the constraints of this chapter make it an impossible task to do so in the depth necessary to do the subject true justice. Consequently research must be focussed. The extensive research previously conducted on the royal parks, albeit not child-focused, make further research of the royal parks less appealing than exploring the lesser-researched archives of the non-royal parks. However, even the non-royal parks are too numerous to be researched in their entirety. Amherst lists no less than nineteen principal non-royal parks created and maintained by the LCC in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Golder's Hill, Waterlow, Finsbury, Clissold, Springfield, Victoria, Maryon, Deptford, Southwark, Kennington, Vauxhall, Battersea, Camberwell, Ruskin, Brockwell, Dulwich, Avery Hill, Eltham and Ravenscourt.[35]

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[33] Ibid., p. 3.
[34] Examples of which are Church, Richard, *The Royal Parks of London* (HMSO, 1956) Thurston, Hazel, *Royal Parks for the People* (David and Charles, 1974); Williams, Guy, *The Royal Parks of London* (Constable, 1978) and Tait, M and Parker, E, *London's Royal Parks* (Think Publishing, 2006).
[35] Amherst, p. 120.

Although 'each [LCC] park has features which give it an individual character',[36] there would be an inevitable repetitiveness in researching the facilities that the LCC provided for each of these parks. As Amherst states:

> There must be a certain repetition in describing each one separately. Many details are of necessity more or less the same in each. The London County Council is responsible for the greater number, and in every case they have thought certain things essential. For instance, the band stand; no park, large or small, is considered complete without one...Every park, except Waterlow, which is too hilly, furnishes ample area for games. Cricket pitches by the dozen, and space for numerous goal-posts is provided for, in each and all of the larger parks. Gymnasiums too, are included in the requirements of a fully equipped park. Swings for the smaller children, bars, ropes, and higher swings for older boys and girls are supplied. Bathing pools of greater or less dimensions are often added...Then the larger parks have green-houses and a succession of plants are on view all year round...Fancy ducks and geese attract the small children on all the ponds, and some parks have enclosures for deer or other animals. Sand gardens, or "seasides" for children to dig in, are also frequently included.[37]

J J Sexby's *The Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London: Their History and Associations* (1898) confirms Amherst's observation. In his book, Sexby provides a chapter by chapter account of the history and facilities of the majority[38] of the LCC parks included in Amherst's frontispiece. In almost every example Sexby confirms that most parks did include the facilities aforementioned by Amherst. Furthermore, a detailed study of one of the London County Council's parks, Victoria Park in Hackney, reveals the accuracy of Amherst's observation, for every 'essential' item on her list was indeed included at this park.

Situated in the East End of London, the 217 acres of Victoria Park is of particular interest for several reasons. It was the first municipal park in London; it provided many facilities for children, often on an experimental level by the London County Council (LCC) and it has been much overlooked by researchers and writers. Compared to the wealth of research on the royal parks, there are a mere two books on Victoria

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[36] Ibid., p. 123.
[37] Ibid., pp. 123-124.
[38] Sexby does not make reference to Avery Hill (created in 1902), Eltham (1902) nor Ruskin (1907) which were all opened after the publication of his book in 1898.

Park.[39] As Charles Poulsen, the author of the earliest and most comprehensive of these poignantly observed, 'Much has been written on the royal parks of Westminster, Kensington and Marylebone...[but] nobody has yet thought plebeian Victoria Park worth more than a passing mention'.[40]

One reason for this has become apparent during the present research. The archives for Victoria Park often prove to be frustratingly sketchy. This is particularly the case from 1889 to 1965 when the LCC was responsible for Victoria Park. The LCC was the first metropolitan-wide form of general local government, replacing the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) which had, hitherto, been responsible for running Victoria Park. Much of the archival material of the LCC has been 'culled',[41] and this appears to have included a significant amount of documentation for Victoria Park from 1889 to 1965.

Nonetheless, although children did not seem to have been at the forefront of considerations when the park was suggested, designed and built there is sufficient archival material to provide evidence that facilities were created for children to meet their requirements. These included the children's hygienic, physical, moral, educational and social needs through the provision of bathing, playgrounds, water fountains, botany beds and recreational areas such as the boating lake and sandpit respectively.

Victoria Park is an excellent example of a park that has adapted to its users – primarily children - and in order to appreciate this it is necessary to have some knowledge of history of the park's creation.

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[39] Poulsen, Charles, *Victoria Park* (Stephney Books, 1976) and Mernick, P, *A Pictorial History of Victoria Park* (East London History Society, 1996)
[40] Poulsen, p. 1.
[41] Verbal source from staff at London Metropolitan Archives, August 2007.

2.2 The Creation of Victoria Park

The early history of Victoria Park is well documented and the extensive archives relating to it are held at The London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). Research on this early period has been conducted in depth in both Poulsen's aforementioned book and also in a file compiled by the LCC on research on the Park conducted in relation to the creation of a brass plaque commemorating the Park's history which was installed at the start of the twentieth century.[42]

When Victoria Park was created in the mid-nineteenth century, the East End of London was a centre of industry and shipping, the workforce of which was predominantly poor and unhealthy and inhabited squalid, densely populated accommodation. In his introduction to the area, Nikolaus Pevsner describes the region as being, 'a continuous sprawl of small streets, interspersed with gasworks, breweries and miscellaneous factories and criss-crossed by canals and railways'.[43] Pevsner also states that the population of the area rose from approximately 142,000 in 1801 to nearly 600,000 by 1901, and that 'appalling living and working conditions were revealed by investigations following the mid-C19 cholera epidemics'.[44]

Part of these investigations included *The First Annual Report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages* in 1839 which identified that the mortality rate of the East End was double that of other parts of the city.[45] In the same report, it was suggested that:

> The mortality of cities in England and Wales is high, but it may be immeasurably reduced. A good, general system of sewers; the intersection of the dense, crowded districts of the metropolis by a few spacious streets; and a park in the East end of London would probably

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[42] Victoria Park Files at LMA (GLC/AR/HB/01/225 – 1907-1937).
[43] Cherry, B, O'Brien, C and Pevsner, N (Yale, 2005), p. 380.
[44] Ibid., p. 380.
[45] First Annual Report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England, Appendix (P) Letter to the Registrar-General from William Farr, 6 May 1939, table G, pp.114-115.

> diminish the annual deaths by several thousands, prevent many years of sickness, and add several years to the lives of the entire population.[46]

Whilst the West End enjoyed the open-spaces of several royal parks, the residents of the East End had no such provision and the Report of the Registrar-General appears to the be first reference to the necessity and benefit of creating an open space in this area. However, it was not compassion that first inspired the creation of a park in this area, but rather it was fear. The report continues:

> The poorer classes would be benefited by these measures, and the poor-rates would be reduced; but all classes of the community are interested in their adoption, for the epidemics, whether influenza, typhus, or cholera, small-pox, scarlatina, or measles, which arise in the east end of the town, do not stay there; they travel to the west end, and prove fatal in wide streets and squares.[47]

Despite the recommendation of creating a park in the East End, a year passed and no action had been taken, so 'the people themselves began to act'.[48] Poulsen claims that 'the only surviving records of these first steps appear in brief, infrequent and unconnected newspaper reports, and these do not agree in many particulars'.[49] This does not seem to be the case as the archives at the LMA provide a comprehensive record of this stage of the Park's development. This includes the original lengthy petition requesting a park in the East End that was submitted to Queen Victoria by the MP, George Frederick Young, with 30,000 signatures. In it he eloquently and verbosely puts forward again the case for the need for a park in this particular area:

> These Poor People, closely crowded in confined districts, have no open spaces in the vicinity of their humble dwellings for air, exercise or healthful recreation; circumstances which produce the most painful effects on their physical and moral condition. Exposed as they are from the fluctuations of Trade to frequent privation, the miseries of want are aggravated by the continued prevalence of disease, and the ravages of death among them are, in some places, perfectly appalling...the mortality is more than double that of those parts of the Metropolis which are more effectually ventilated. Fever is constantly prevailing in these places...Unable to breathe the pure air of heaven with their families,

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[46] Ibid., p. 113.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Poulsen, p. 16.
[49] Ibid.

> multitudes are driven into habits of intemperance, bringing in their train demoralization, disease and death.[50]

Although he makes no direct reference to children throughout his petition, Young certainly eludes to them through his inclusive references of 'Poor People' and 'families'. Children, as well as adults, were perceived as suffering for want of fresh air and exercise the results of which were 'disease and death'.

Despite the bleak picture that Young painted, his purpose was to offer a solution:

> Happily we are enabled to ensure your Majesty, that these afflicting evils are not beyond the possibility of remedy or elevation. The same official authority, which has demonstrated the mortality, declares that "it may be immeasurably reduced", and among other means there is expressly suggested the formation of a "Park in the East end of London".[51]

The Park was approved by the Queen in 1841 with the passing of 'An Act to enable her Majesty's Commissioners of Woods to complete the Contract for the Sale of *York House*, and to purchase certain Lands for a Royal Park'.[52] As Philip Mernick, the author of the second, less comprehensive, history of Victoria Park, observes, 'thus, a grand house and centre of the highest society made provision for a recreation ground for the very lowest'.[53]

The site of the Park was acquired piecemeal, with the last of the land purchases being made in 1848. James Pennethorne (1801-1871) was responsible for the creation and maintenance of Victoria Park. He had already been involved with the design of Regent's Park and would later by responsible for Battersea Park. Pennethorne was the official architect of the Office of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, and a protégé

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[50] Young, George, Frederick, Petition to Queen Victoria regarding Tower Hamlets Park (1840).
[51] Ibid.
[52] *The Statutes of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland 4& 5 Victoria, 1841* (1841), pp. 116-128.
[53] Mernick, p. 6.

of John Nash. Pennethorne (Figure 2) worked with Nash on Regent's Park, although he received his initial training under Augustus Pugin.

Figure 2: Sir James Pennethorne (Source: National Portrait Gallery (Artist Unknown))

Pennethorne's initial design for the park (Figure 3) was, 'in the "romantic" tradition, with curvaceous lines and winding paths, dotted here and there with trees singly and in clumps'.[54] This style is more commonly referred to as the English landscape garden: 'a garden seen on a large scale, naturalistic in appearance and having no regularity of design'.[55]

Figure 3: Design for Layout of Victoria Park by James Pennethorne, 4 June 1841 (Source: LMA)

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[54] Poulsen, p. 34.
[55] Symes, Michael, *A Glossary of Garden History* (Shire, 2000), p. 72.

Although at first glance Pennethorne's plan for Victoria Park appears to exemplify the components of the Romantic or English landscape tradition, it fails to comply with the design principles of nineteenth-century parks which have been identified as: 'The use of winding walks to disguise the limits of the parks. Perimeter belts of trees, shrubberies to divide the park into discrete areas of different character and for different uses, the serpentine forms of lakes in which the extent of the water seems greater than it really is, and the picturesque siting of buildings'.[56] It is therefore not surprising that Pennethornes's plan has been criticised as 'lacking the genius of Nash's Reptonian exercise at Regent's Park. There is no evidence of any intention to enclose interesting spaces or to frame dramatic vistas with either earthworks or planting'.[57] What is also clear from Pennethorne's plan is that at the early stages of design there was no specific features or facilities created primarily for the use of children.

Progress on the park was slow and this was noted in *The Builder* in 1846.[58] The reasons for the delay were twofold and both were due to the limitation of funds. Parliament and government 'counted and grudged every penny. Never before had the State undertaken a great public improvement in response to outside pressure, and it was thought by many that such a policy might well prove a dangerous precedent'.[59] Additionally, Pennethorne's plan to raise finance through the sale of villas and grand houses in and around the perimeter of the park, as had proved reasonably successful at Regent's Park, proved to be a failure. At Victoria Park, not one villa was taken up, as 'the wealthy still fought shy of an East End address, and were never convinced that it could provide a suitable residence for the respectable. Eventually the Crown abandoned the idea'.[60]

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[56] Conway, Hazel and Lambert, David, *Public Prospects: Historic Gardens Under Threat* (The Garden History Society and the Victorian Society, 1993).
[57] RMJM, *Victoria Park: Restoration, Development and Management Plan, Final Report*, (RMJM, 1989), Item 1.2.8, p. 8.
[58] Anon, 'Victoria Park and the "Woods and Forests"', *The Builder*, 9 January 1846, CCV, p. 11.
[59] Poulsen, p. 35. This notion is also reinforced in an article in *The Garden* 'Victoria Park: Its Preservation and Extension', p. 327.
[60] Ibid., p. 38.

It is interesting to note that there was not, as may have been expected, a grand opening to the Park, but rather the public simply took it over from 1845 and used it despite the fact that the gardens were still being laid out. Poulsen observes that, 'the final completion of the park was never reached. Indeed, it has not been reached to this day'.[61]

From the very start, the public used the park as they wanted and needed. Writing of the Park in 1877, Nathan Cole observed that the local residents 'look upon the park as their own property'.[62] It was they who petitioned for its formation, they who took over the park for their own purposes before it was even finished, and they who would increasingly impinge on Pennethorne's romantic design to create a park that suited their wants and needs.

The park proved a huge success and in 1846 *The Illustrated London News* reported that on Good Friday Victoria Park was visited by 25,000 people, 'and by a considerably greater number on Easter Monday'.[63] The popularity of the Park was to continue. In 1892 the LCC held a count of all the people who used its open spaces on Whit Monday of that year. Victoria Park was the most popular with 303,516 visiting during the 17 hours that it was open that day. The next most popular site, Battersea Park, which is almost an equal size to Victoria Park, received almost only a third as many visitors.[64]

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[61] Ibid., p. 39.
[62] Cole, N, *The Royal Parks and Gardens of London* (Journal of Horticulture, 1877), p. 27.
[63] Anon, 'Victoria Park', *The London Illustrated News,* 2 May 1846.
[64] Poulsen, p. 104.

2.3 Bathing in the Park

Perhaps the primary need of the local people, including both adults and children, that Victoria Park was to satisfy initially was the provision of bathing amenities, which 'was urgently needed for reasons of hygiene, not yet for sport'.[65] In the 1840s the local population had little or no access to facilities for personal cleanliness. Consequently, 'after a long hot summer day's work, men and boys began to bathe illicitly in the dangerous and polluted waters of the Regent's Canal'.[66] Child labour was very commonplace at this time. The 1833 Factory Act had been a step towards improving conditions and working hours for children, but the very restrictions it placed give an indication of how extreme working conditions still were for children at this time. The 1833 Act banned child workers under the age of nine but stipulated that children between nine and thirteen could work no more than nine hours a day and those aged thirteen to eighteen could work for no more than twelve hours a day.

Figure 4: Regent's Canal with Victoria Park visible to the Right (Source: Author's Photograph)

As the Regent's Canal runs along the southern edge of the park (Figures 3 and 4) it was not surprising that the designer and managers of the park should be concerned about the practice of workers bathing in the Canal. However, the main anxiety regarding the use of the Canal to bathe in was

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[65] RMJM, *Victoria Park*, Item 1.2.14, p. 11.
[66] Poulsen, p. 46.

not, as might be assumed, fears about the suitability of the water for bathing or the dangers of this practice, but rather the indecency of it. In a report dated 1846 on bathing in the Canal, Pennethorne stated that 'many improper scenes occur',[67] and he therefore suggested that a suitable private bathing place be created within the Park. Pennethorne had already put forward a proposal in 1846 that an ornamental lake be created in the southern section of the park, but he further suggested a large bathing lake be built in the centre of the eastern section of the park so that privacy could be afforded to its users. The design that accompanied his report (Figure 5) clearly shows both the ornamental and bathing lakes. The plan also clearly indicates planting around the bathing lake to afford privacy to the users as well as the addition of a network of paths providing access to the new bathing lake. Both lakes include 'islands' which were to utilise the excess soil of digging the lakes.

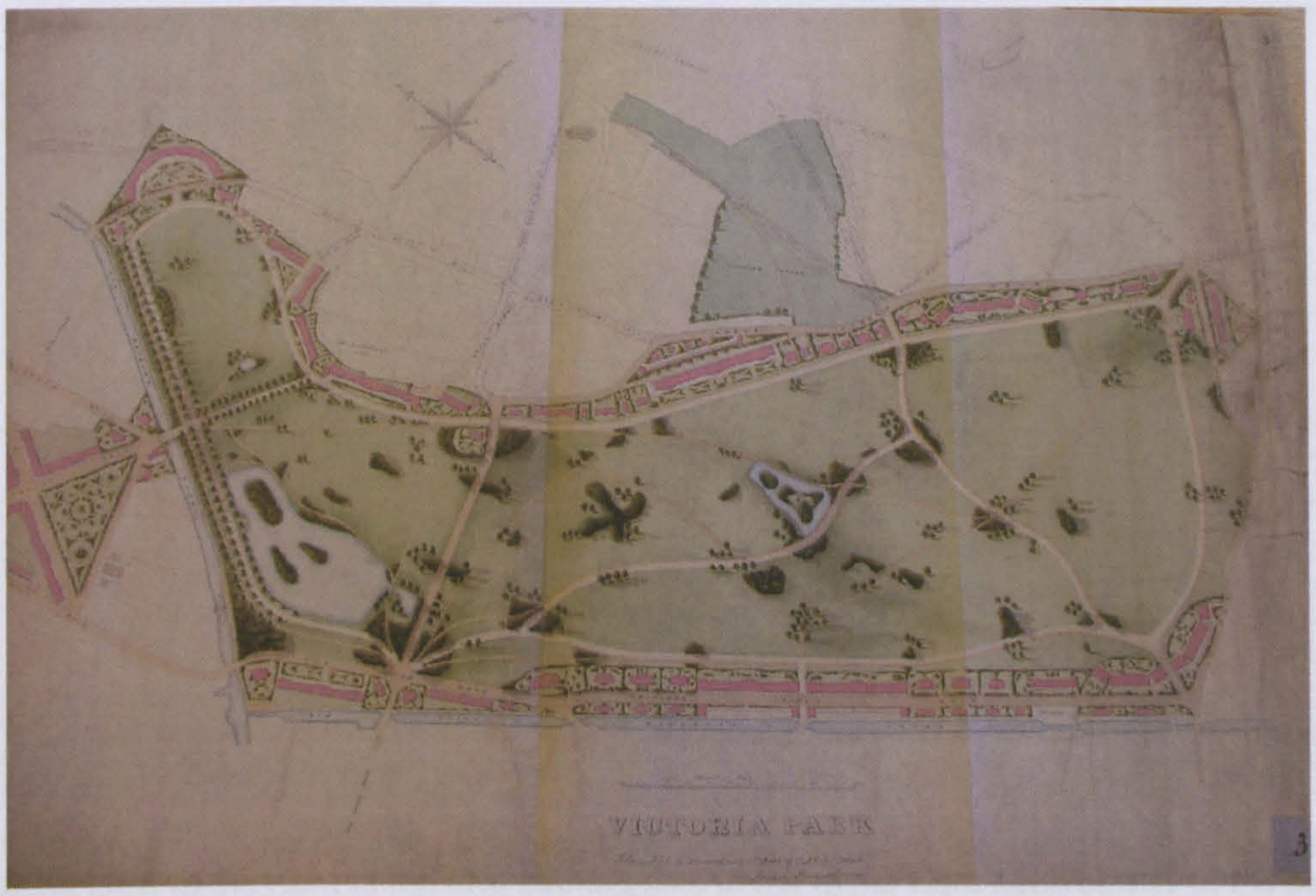

Figure 5: Plan for Improvements at Victoria Park by James Pennethorne, 3rd October 1846 showing ornamental water in the South of the park and the smaller bathing lake to the East (Source: LMA)

The MBW approved both the ornamental and bathing lakes. The bathing lake was 300 feet long, and open to men and boys for swimming from 4am to 8am in the summer; the hours of which were later extended from

[67] Report by Pennethorne to the Board, 3 October 1846 (MBW/OW/VP/2).

6am to 8am and 4pm to 9pm. The 1850 Factor Act stipulated that children would only work within the hours of 6am to 6pm in the summer so clearly these times would have incorporated provision for working children to bathe. The lake proved to be immensely popular, and 'tens of thousands descended on it every morning'.[68] By 1875 the bathing lake had proved so popular and 'highly appreciated by the Public that the present bathing lake is now found totally inadequate for the purpose'.[69] Consequently a second lake was built in the south, which was extended in 1876 to create a lake some 650 feet long and 127 feet wide. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1894-1896 (Figure 6) clearly shows the two bathing lakes, as well as illustrating the development of further planting around the lakes. This map also gives an indication of the dense accommodation surrounding the park.

Figure 6: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1894-6) showing the addition of a second bathing lake, to the right of the first bathing lake in the upper right hand corner of the park (Source: British Library)

The popularity of the lakes continued. Writing on Victoria Park in 1898, the first chief officer of the LCC's Parks Department, Lt.-Col. J. J. Sexby, remarked:

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[68] Poulsen, p. 48.
[69] Letter from HM Office of Works to the Treasury, 27 November 1875. (MBW/OW/VP/6).

> The area of the park is so large that it is possible to provide for nearly every form of out-door amusement and recreation. Foremost among these must be placed swimming and bathing, for which this park affords special facilities. As many as 25,000 bathers have been counted on a summer morning before eight o'clock. What an incalculable boom open-air swimming baths like those provided here must prove to the neighbourhood! The principal bathing lake is 300 feet long. It is provided with a concrete bottom, shelters and diving boards, and all the accessories to make it a perfect out-door swimming bath, and it has been pronounced the finest in the world.[70]

Figure 7: Bathing in Victoria Park (Source: Sexby, JJ, *Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London* (1898))

Although he does not make a direct reference to children using the lakes to bathe in, the photograph that accompanies Sexby's text (Figure 7) very clearly illustrates how popular the bathing lake was with boys.

The lakes were initially created to fulfil a basic, hygienic need of the local people. As Poulsen points out 'Bathing was not then considered a thing one did for pleasure, but a kind of stern moral duty, a castigation of the flesh'.[71] However, due to several social circumstances the use of the lakes was to change from bathing for hygiene to swimming for exercise,

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[70] Sexby, JJ, *London County Council Note Book of the Parks, Gardens, Recreation Grounds, and Open Spaces of London* (Jas. Truscott and Sons, 1897), p. 33, and also in *The Municipal Parks and Gardens of London* (Elliot Stock, 1898), pp. 555-556.
[71] Poulsen, p. 48.

pleasure and education, particularly for children. In 1854, Dr John Snow' (1813-1858), a physician, anaesthetist and epidemiologist, traced the source of a cholera epidemic in Soho to a water supply, proving that cholera was not airborne disease, but in this instance was spread through contaminated water supplies. His discovery was a contributing factor to the 1875 Public Health Act which was created to combat filthy urban living conditions by requiring all new residential constructions to include running water and an internal drainage system. This paved the way for an increase of access to clean water at home which negated the necessity for using the lakes for personal cleanliness. At the same time, there was a heightened awareness of the importance of exercise, which was part of the mid-to-late Victorian pre-occupation with health as inspired by developments in medicine, hospital treatment and a growing awareness of the link between preventative medicine and good health. One form of exercise that had gained immense popularity was swimming. The Metropolitan Swimming Association was created in 1870, and the National Swimming Association three years later.

The LCC Minutes of Proceedings record that in April 1891, an application from the London Schools Swimming Association was received to use the bathing lake for instruction every Saturday morning during the summer months from 9am to 1pm. The application was approved and it was noted that this request fell outside the normal hours of bathing, which were before 8am and after 6pm.

The shift from bathing for hygiene to for physical education continued to develop. In 1906 the Education Committee of the LCC approached the park for permission to use the lakes:

> The Education Committee have asked that facilities may be afforded at Victoria-park for instruction in swimming to be given to children attending elementary schools maintained by the Council, and upon careful consideration of the matter, we see no objection to the use of the men's bathing lake in the park being reserved for the purpose from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. This arrangement, which meets with the approval of the Education Committee, would interfere, only

> to a small extent, with the present facilities for bathing afforded to the public.[72]

The popularity and benefits of the park and bathing lakes on the health and physique of local children was observed and reported by a number of journalists. In an article written in 1909 entitled 'East London Water Nymphs: Remarkable Scenes in Victoria Park: Six Thousand Children Bathe', which described the scenes at the bathing lakes at Victoria Park during a heat wave, the journalist wrote:

> One effect of the heat wave has been to prompt some thousands of little East Enders to have a bath, and in Victoria Park there have been remarkable scenes this week... In a minute or two the bell would give the signal for them to jump in the water. Five thousand boys lined the edge of the lake, the left foot forward ready to dive or swim. Some looked puny and emaciated, their thin, sapless limbs telling the awful tale of life in the mean streets of London. But many stood out from the white mass of humanity with admirably proportioned bodies, in the immature beauty of adolescence.[73]

It was perhaps the lakes' provision of opportunities for exercise that journalist, essayist and critic E V Lucas was thinking of when he wrote in an article in 1918: 'The West-enders, even without their parks, would still be healthy and moderately happy; but Victoria Park must literally have kept thousands upon thousands of children alive'.[74]

Lucas' article describes how he stumbled by chance upon Victoria Park and witnessed the thousands of naked boys bathing in 'the completest triumph of nakedness I ever dreamed of...For some reason or other it has been ordained that no one shall bathe absolutely naked in any of the London indoor swimming baths. But at Victoria Park a wiser rule prevails'.[75]

The 'rule' at Victoria Park was governed by the Amateur Swimming Association which declared in 1905 that all bathers over the age of ten

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[72] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1906, 31 July, p. 587.
[73] Anon, 'East London Water Nymphs: Remarkable Scenes in Victoria Park: Six Thousand Children Bathe', *East London Advertiser,* 14 August 1909.
[74] Lucas, EV, 'The Green Among the Grey', *The Sphere,* 12 October 1918.
[75] Ibid.

'must wear a costume or drawers'.[76] It seems likely that the allowance of nude bathing for children was more to do with poverty and practicality than the result of 'a wiser rule'.

Figure 8: 'Guarding the Clothes. – A youngster in Victoria Park who had the thrill-less job of minding the clothes while all his friends were swimming', *Daily Telegraph,* 13 August 1932 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

The general popularity of the lakes continued, and a hot summer in 1933 brought with it a further increase in the number of bathers; the consequence of which was that the water in the lakes became unsanitary and had to be closed off to the public.[77] By 1934, the LCC concluded that some action must be taken. In one of the lengthiest and most comprehensive entries in the LCC Minutes of Proceedings, the Council acknowledged that, 'having regard to the densely populated neighbourhood in which the park is situated, and to the popularity of the bathing lake, the loss of these facilities undoubtedly deprives the public of an amenity they have enjoyed for many years'.[78]

The Minutes note that the Council had rejected the possibility of trying to adapt the old lakes on the grounds that it would be 'both an expense and unsatisfactory'.[79] The Council therefore came to the conclusion that:

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[76] Mernick, p. 68.
[77] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1934, 18 December, p. 848.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

The best solution to the problem is to provide an open-air swimming bath with complete filtration plant and all the appurtenances of an up-to-date bath including wadding pools, sun-bathing terraces, refreshment rooms and space for spectators. The large population for which the bath is designed to cater renders it necessary, in our view, to provide a bath of a "super" type, and it is therefore proposed that the bath should be 200 feet long and 90 feet wide, instead of the standard 165 feet by 66 feet. The bath would provide facilities for aquatic sports and competitions. The estimated cost of the bath is £25,500 and that of its maintenance is £2,200 a year...A suitable site for the bath would be in the north-west corner of the dry playground adjacent to Grove-road, this being most convenient for public access and for proximity to the necessary water, electricity and drainage services.[80]

The new swimming pool (Figure 9) was an excellent example of municipal design of the period, and also reflected the trends of swimming for both sport and recreation and of sunbathing. The fashion designer Coco Chanel, is often credited for introducing the suntan to twentieth century society when she accidentally got sunburnt whilst visiting the French Riviera. However, the connection between health and exposure to the sun had been recognised earlier in the century when Niels Finsen was awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1903 for his 'Finsen Light Therapy' which was to utilise the production of Vitamin D through exposure to the sun to cure several diseases including rickets. Certainly the potential health benefits of exposure to the sun were picked up by educationalists at the time, particularly in the Open-Air School system where children were dressed in uniforms that encouraged maximum exposure to the sun, for example at Stowey School in London in the late 1930 as will be explored further in Chapter 4.

A newspaper article on the opening of the new pool recorded that 'There are stretches of shingle to lie on and the baths have been so planned that no shadow is cast except by human beings. Wherever you are you can be in the sunshine. There are sun-bathing terraces and a café which can be used by people in bathing-dress'.[81]

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Anon, 'How they will spend Bank Holiday at the East End Seaside', *Weekly Illustrated*, 1 August 1936.

Figure 9: The Open Air Swimming Pool at Victoria Park, 1934 (Source: LCC File at LMA)

The design for the Victoria Park swimming pool was the work of two architects employed by the LCC's Parks Department, Harry Arnold Rowbotham and T L Smithson, who designed a number of pools in London that were to 'form a distinct sub-genre within the overall context of British Lidos; hard to place stylistically – being only faintly Art Deco, yet patently Modernist in character – and certainly never copied anywhere outside London'.[82]

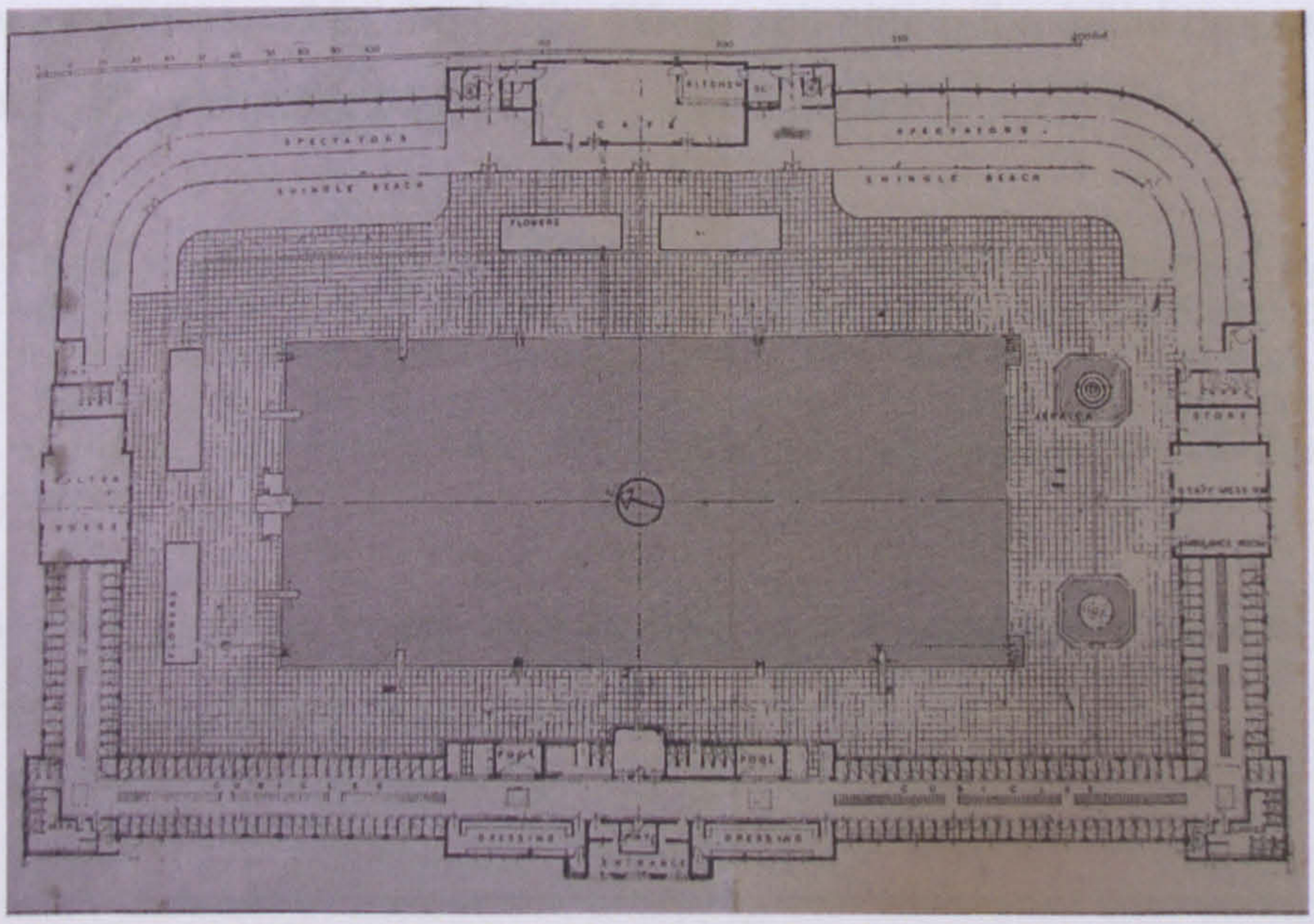

Figure 10: Design for the Open Air Swimming Bath at Victoria Park by H A Rowbotham, ARIBA, as illustrated in *The Architect and Building News*, 22 May 1936, p. 224.

When the new open-air swimming-pool opened on 16 May 1936,[83] it was one of nine open-air swimming pools created by the LCC in London,[84]

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[82] Smith, Janet, *Liquid Assets: The Lidos and Open Air Swimming Pools of Britain* (English Heritage, 2005), p. 29.
[83] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1936, 7 July, p. 29.

with a further four being created within the next three years.[85] However, it was the sheer scale of the new pool in Victoria Park that marked it apart and attracted a mass of media coverage. It was described as 'one of the finest recreation centres in the metropolis',[86] and that it was 'so large and thoroughly equipped the Olympia [sic] Games Swimming could be held there'.[87]

The opening ceremony clearly reflected the era's emphasis on sport and exercise as it included a display of swimming, a water polo match,[88] and 'A display of exercises by the Women's League of Health and Beauty'.[89] Children were encouraged at the pool, and one of the newspaper articles on the new pool stated that the ideal of the LCC was for '"Every East End child to be a swimmer"',[90] and in line with this children were admitted free of charge except on Saturdays and Sundays.[91]

With the new pool in place, the two old lakes had become redundant in terms of their service as swimming pools. The question of what to do with them was addressed by the LCC. When submitting the initial proposal for the open-air swimming pool in 1934, it was noted:

> There is also at Victoria-park a small pond allocated for bathing by women and girls only. The use of this pond for bathing was discontinued for the same reasons as the large bathing lake used by men and boys. The question of the adaptation of the latter lake for other purposes, such as model yacht sailing, children's boating, etc., will be considered in due course.[92]

It was not until three years later in 1937 that the question of what to do with the bathing lake was concluded:

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[84] Anon, 'Lido Opened in East End', *Star,* 16 May 1936.
[85] Smith, p. 4.
[86] Anon, 'Lido Opened in East End', *Star,* 16 May 1936.
[87] Anon, 'How they will spend Bank Holiday at the East End Seaside', *Weekly Illustrated,* 1 August 1936.
[88] Anon, 'Lido Opened in East End', *Star,* 16 May 1936.
[89] Anon, *Illustrated London News,* 23 May 1936.
[90] Anon, 'How they will spend Bank Holiday at the East End Seaside', *Weekly Illustrated,* 1 August 1936.
[91] Ibid.
[92] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1934, 18 December, p. 848.

The former bathing lake at Victoria-park has been out of use for some years, owing to the difficulty of keeping the water in a satisfactory condition. As there is now an open-air swimming bath in this park, we have considered the question of adapting the lake for useful purpose and we have approved a scheme for forming a paddling pond, a model yachting pond, and a juvenile boating lake and for using the remainder of the site for additional lavatory accommodation...There is no doubt that the facilities which the scheme will provide will be appreciated by the public, and will be beneficial to the many children who visit the park from the neighbourhood.[93]

[93] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1937, 13 July, p. 61.

2.4 Model Yachting

Although the LCC Minutes of 1937 suggested creating a pond for model yachting, this 'sport'[94] had already been taking place in the park for many years.

Aside from bathing and swimming, one of the main recreational uses for the original bathing lakes in Victoria Park was the sailing of model yachts. The lakes were given over to bathing from 6-8am and from 4-9pm in the summer, but outside of these hours, 'the lakeside could be used by all, and the water was taken over for the sailing of model boats. Here the children could trail their crude home-made craft, and the old seamen from Dockland [sic] would come to sail and show off their beautiful and exact replicas of their old ships'.[95]

At the time, Model Yachting was regarded as 'an organized sport'.[96] Although several books were written on the subject of building and sailing models yachts,[97] these were primarily aimed at adults, despite the connotations of model yachting as being a pastime only suitable for children. In 1879 T E Biddle wrote:

> Many have been the sneers levelled at those who have taken to the pursuit of Miniature Yachting. It has been styled trivial and ridiculous, and only fit for the amusement of children, but I very much doubt any one of those cavillers could either design, or build from draft a Model of a Yacht, mast, rig, and trim the same, so that it will beat to windward in the teeth of a fresh breeze or fetch off a lee shore in a gale of wind.[98]

Despite Biddle's defensive stance of the skill required by adults to build a model yacht, there were others who acknowledged the educational and even potentially career-enhancing benefits of model boat building for children. Although he was writing for adult model yacht enthusiasts in

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[94] Black, John, *Yachting with Models,* (Whittlesey House, 1939), p. xv.
[95] Poulsen, p. 49.
[96] Black, p. xv.
[97] For example Black, and Biddle, TE, *Model Yacht Building and Sailing* (Charles Wilson, 1879).
[98] Biddle, introduction.

America, John Black, a teacher in the public schools of Massachusetts, recognised:

> Today in our school systems much attention is being given to the amount of handiwork in our curriculums. Financial depressions have shown us that one should be able to use one's hands in some kind of work. For this reason the shops of the manual training departments of our schools are being enlarged and used more than ever before. This activity applies not only to boys but also to girls, who are rapidly becoming adept in the art of making things with their hands. Of all the projects in woodworking offered to young and old, few can be presented that will give a broader training in the use of tools, develop a keener sense of beauty, train the eye for fair curves and, in addition, offer the recreational advantages that one derives from the actual sport of sailing a practical model yacht after it has been completed.[99]

It is evident that there were a significant number of model yachters in Victoria Park as The Victoria Park Model Yacht Club was established and members were provided with a shelter in which they could store their models (Figure 11). A visit to the site shows that the shelter still exists today, although it is now boarded up and offers no clues as to its previous employment (Figure 12).

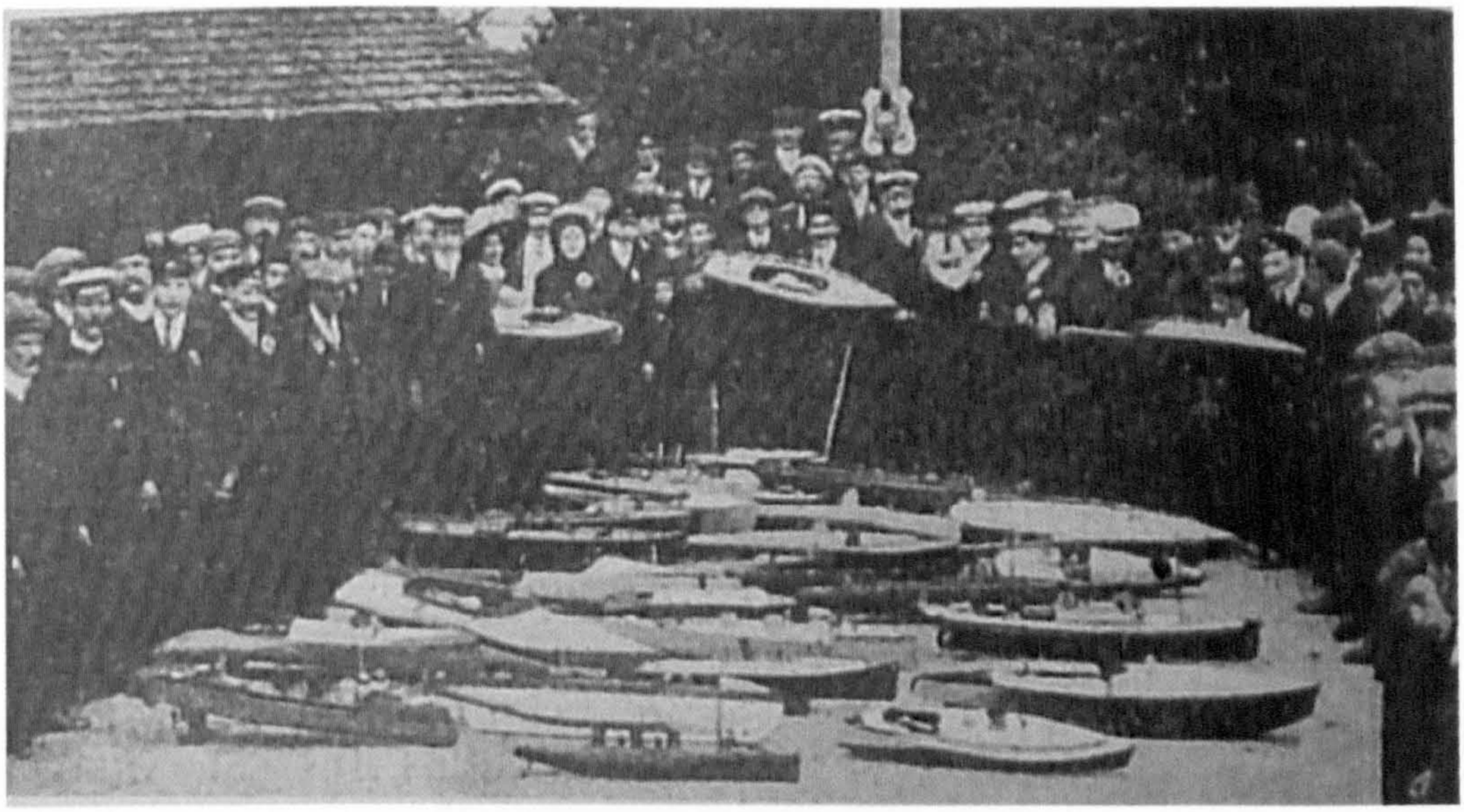

Figure 11: Competitors and their boats for a regatta held on Sunday `5 October 1910, reported in, *The Model Engineer and Electrician* (Source: Mernick, p. 46)[100]. The shelter can be seen in the far left of the photograph.

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[99] Black, p. viii.

[100] Although extensive attempts were made to source this article it has proved unsuccessful.

Figure 12: The former lake/model yacht lake at Victoria Park today, with the former Club House in the left-hand background. (Source: Author's Photograph)

The Model Yacht Club was clearly a subject of local pride. An interviewee for an article entitled 'Romance of the London Parks: A bit of Bow' in *The Daily Herald,* 1937 stated:

> "You ought to come down here on a Sunday when the Victoria Park Model Yacht Club is having a meeting. You'll see a crowd round the lake then. Perhaps you don't know that we put up the world's speed record for model motor-boats on this lake. They have a turn-table in the middle and the boats whizz round and round so fast that you can hardly see them".[101]

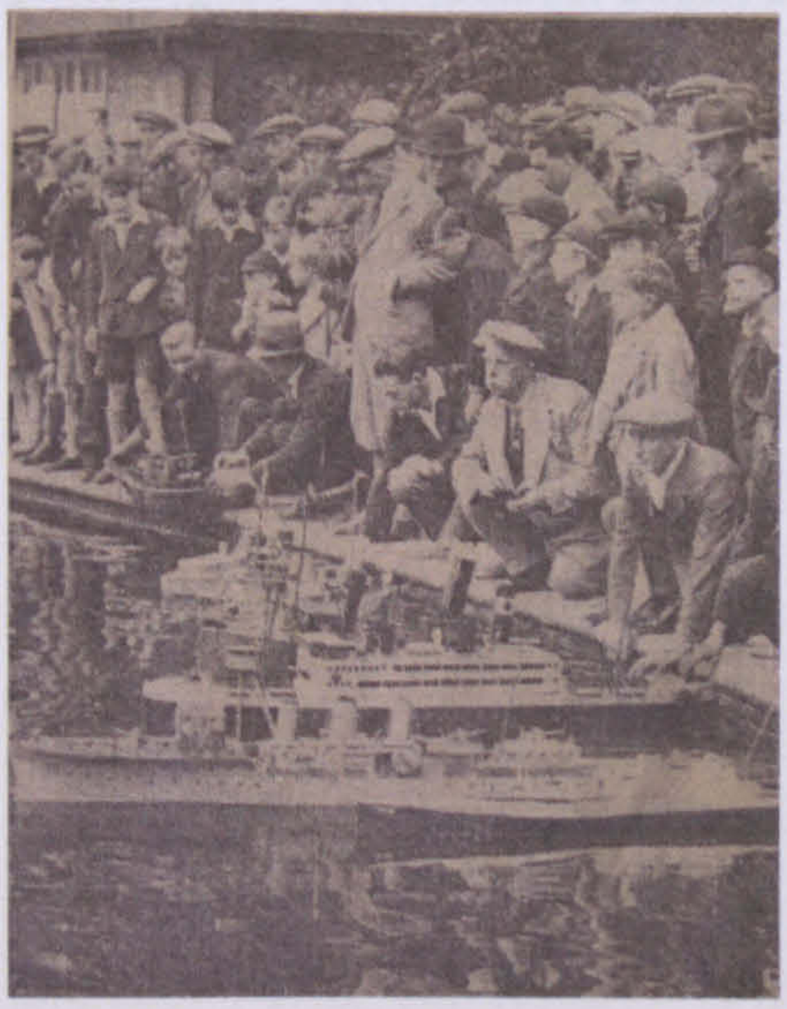

Figure 13: 'Shipping "Magnates." – Owners of varying ages, with model boats ranging from luxury liners to a tug, took part in yesterday's race in Victoria Park, E.' *Daily Sketch,* 20 June 1932 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

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[101] Anon, 'Romance of the London Parks: A bit of Bow', *Daily Herald,* 24 August 1937.

Model yacht races took place in Victoria Park. It is evident from the photograph accompanying an article regarding such a race in 1932 (Figure 13) that large numbers of children were present and quite probably participants at such events. Model yachting was not exclusive to Victoria Park. Mernick claims that clubs around London would compete with one another,[102] and The Round Pond at Kensington Gardens (Figure 14) was perhaps one of the most well-known yachting lakes for young and old alike.

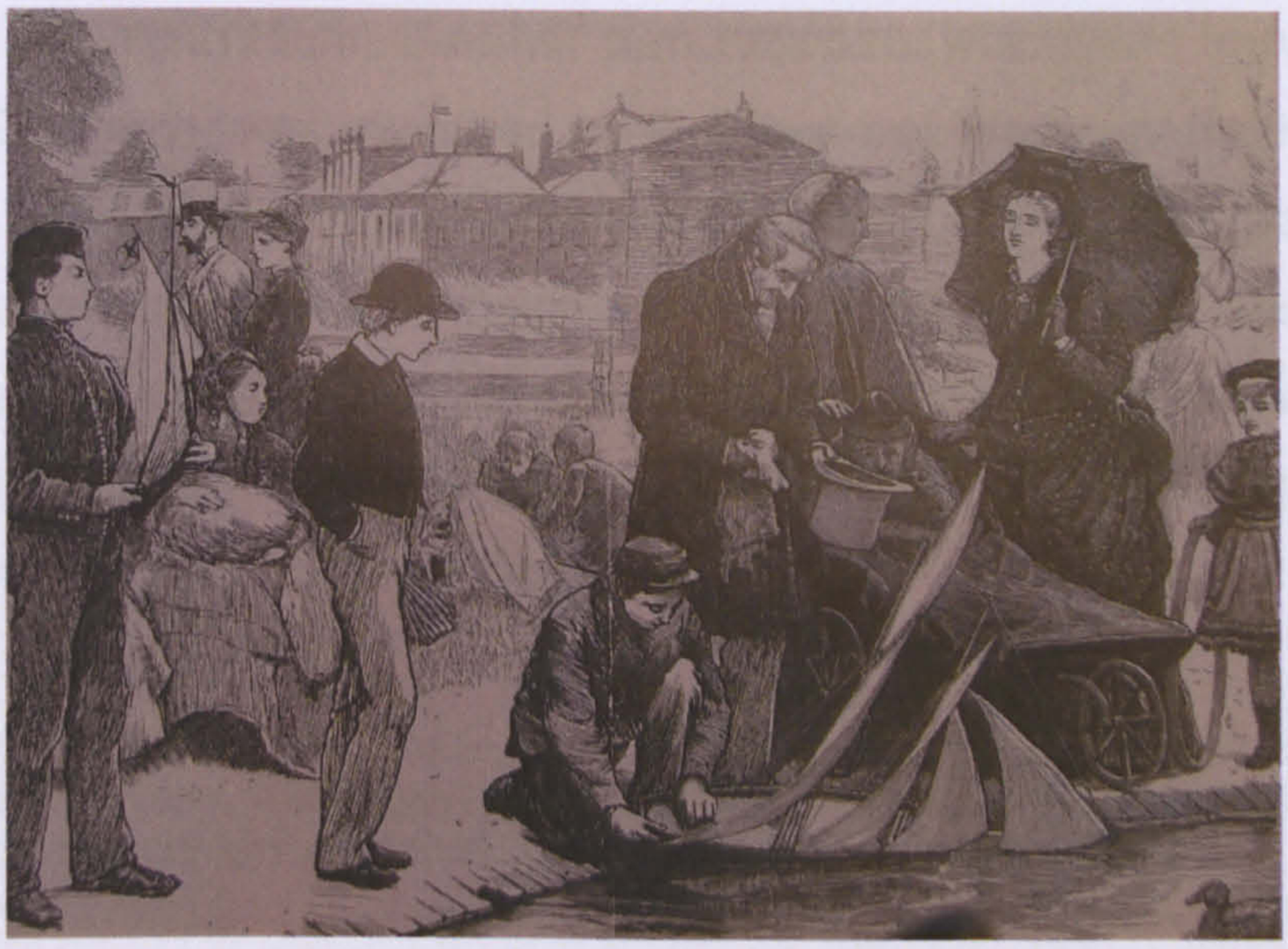

Figure 14: 'The popular pastime of sailing boats on the round pond in Kensington Gardens, an illustration from *The Graphic*, August 1874'. (Source: Edgar, Donald, *The Royal Parks*, p. 61).

[102] Mernick, p. 46.

2.5 The Drinking Fountain and Temperance

Water in the park was not restricted to the lakes. Whilst the lakes were the principal 'natural' feature of the park, the dominating structure was the Victoria Drinking Fountain, also known as the Burdett-Coutts Fountain, presented as a gift by Angela Burdett-Coutts. Grand-daughter to Thomas Coutts, the banker, Burdett-Coutts was not only 'one of the outstanding women of the 19th century',[103] but also one of the richest, using her wealth to donate to charities and help the poor. Burdett-Coutts' proposal to erect a drinking fountain at her own expense, which was to run to the sum of £6,000,[104] was accepted by the Board of Works in 1859 and the fountain was formally presented in 1862 (Figure 15). Made of granite and marble and standing at a height of almost 60 feet, this 'elephantine polygonal structure'[105] was designed by Burdett-Coutts' own architect, Henry Darbishire. Opening the fountain in 1862, Henry Cowper, then First Commissioner of Works, observed,

> We have a lake for bathing and a lake for boating, and lots of other water...Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. Miss Burdett-Coutts's fountain is the most beautiful yet built or even imagined.[106]

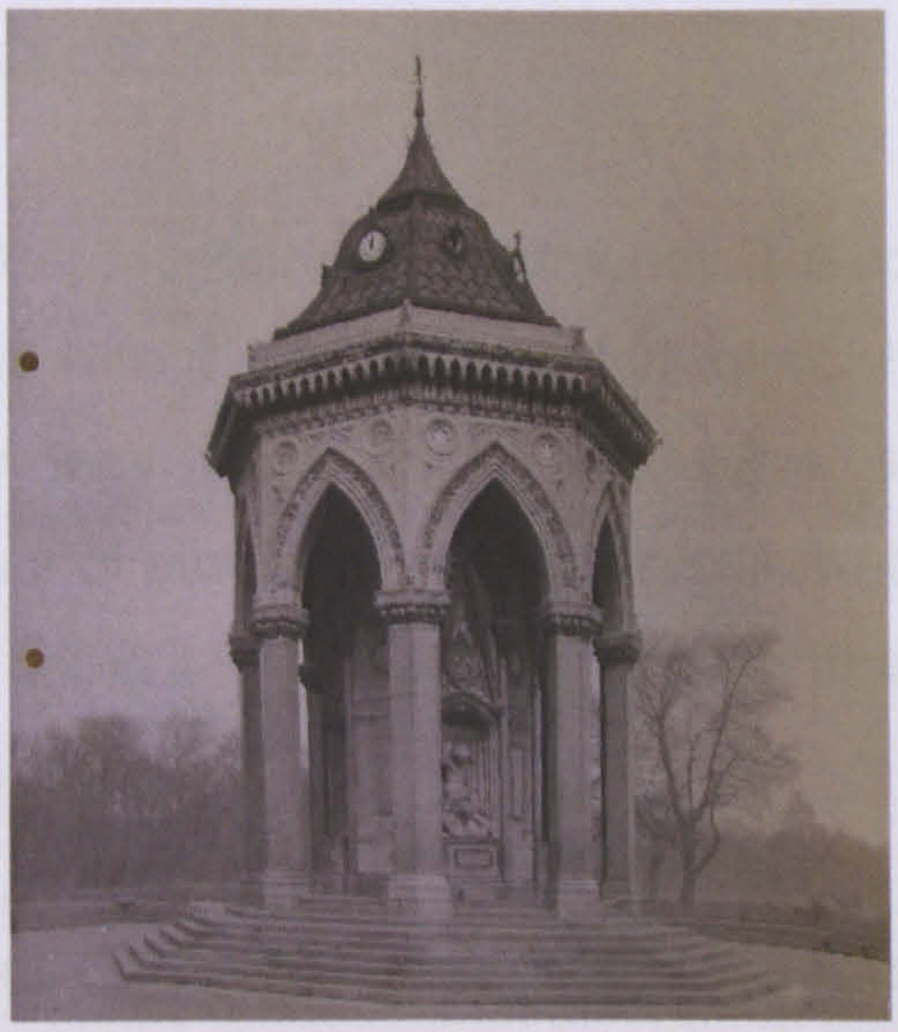

Figure 15: Burdett-Coutts Fountain, Victoria Park (Source: LMA)

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[103] Poulsen, p. 55.
[104] For further details see Victoria Park Files, Volume 4.
[105] Cherry and Pevsner, p. 566.
[106] Quoted in Poulsen, p. 59.

Figure 16: Postcard entitled 'The Fountain near Cadogan Terrace, Victoria Park, N.E.' circa 1900 (Source: Tower Hamlets Archives). Note the number of children using the fountain.

The scale and elaborateness of the Burdett-Coutts' Fountain can perhaps be best appreciated by comparing it with another fountain installed in the park (Figure 16). It is worth noting that this fountain, commemorating John Bright, MP (1811-89), was situated close to an exit of the park and by the Morpeth Arms public house, both of which can be seen in the rear right-hand side of the photograph. Such strategic placing of a water fountain encouraged thirsty people to stay in the park rather than heading out and to the nearby public house.

The presence of water fountains in parks today is a common sight, and is generally associated with the simple relief of thirst. However, in the mid nineteenth century they were highly innovative and served a duel purpose; as a means of providing clean, hygienic water and encouraging temperance. In so doing it is claimed they 'saved thousands of lives from disease and inebriety'.[107]

Although it has received little recognition in relation to the creation of the Burdett-Coutts' Fountain, The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association, originally known as The Metropolitan Free Drinking

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[107] McNamara, Martin, *The Drinking Fountains of London,* Presented to the Diploma in Building Conservation Course at the Architectural Association, June 1986, p. 33.

Association, played a major role in the provision of drinking fountains within London and the parks. It has been suggested that it was they who approached Burdett-Coutts in 1859 to sponsor a fountain in Victoria Park.[108] The Association was created in 1859, as it was 'high time that something was done to provide a readily available supply of pure drinking water in the cause of temperance as well as of hygiene'.[109] Hitherto, 'The Victorian poor relied mainly on public pumps and wells, the water from which, rising through the sewage, the filth and the decomposing bodies which made up a large proportion of London's undersoil was in most cases unfit for drinking'.[110] The first fountain erected in London by the Association was at Snow Hill in 1859 (Figure 17) and within two years the Association had installed 85 fountains in the Metropolis, rising to 140 by 1870, 497 by 1882,[111] and 560 by 1909.[112]

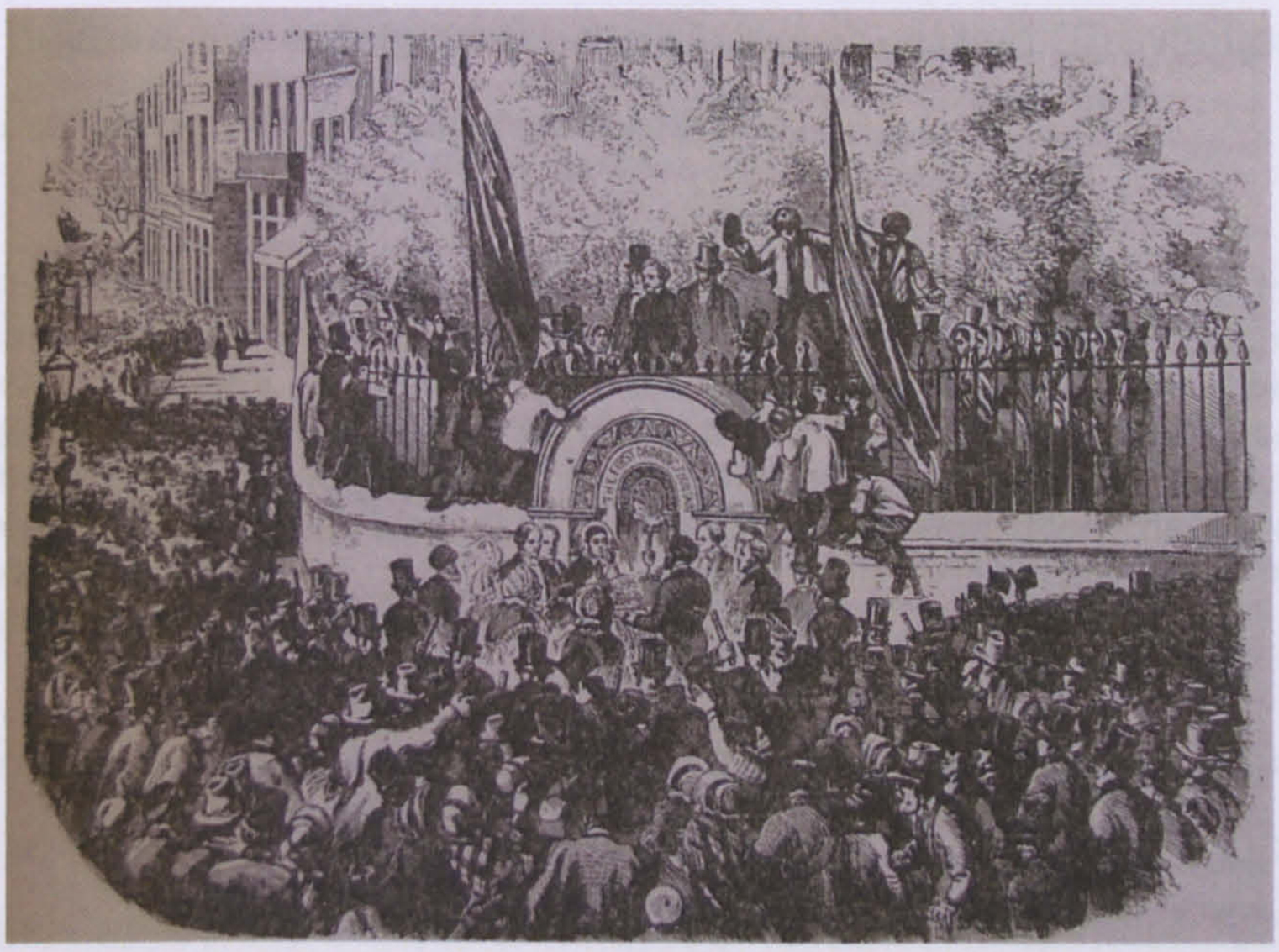

Figure 17: The scene at the opening of the first public drinking fountain in 1859 (Source: *The Illustrated London News,* 30 April 1859). Although it was intended to serve the poor, the fountain is illustrated here as being used by the gentry whilst the poor are beaten back by policemen. Children are seen climbing around the fountain.

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[108] Malchow, Howard, 'Free Water: The Public Drinking Fountain Movement and Victorian London', *The London Journal* (November 1978), p. 199. Although Maclow makes this claim it has not been possible to establish the source of it. Reference to this does not appear to be made in the Minute Book for the Association in 1859. However, the Association did acknowledge the contribution of two water fountains by Burdett-Coutts in Preston, Edgar, *Half a Century of Good Work: A Jubilee History of the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association 1859-1909* (1909), and it seems highly likely that the fountain in Victoria Park was one of these.

[109] Malchow, p. 199.

[110] Girouard, Mark, 'A Hundred Years of Free Water', *Country Life,* April 1959, reprinted by The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association, p. 1.

[111] Ibid., pp. 6, 13 and 16.

[112] Annual Report for 1909 for The Metropolitan Fountain and Drinking Trough Association.

The vogue for installing water fountains in the mid to late nineteenth century was strongly linked to education. Conway states that 'Drinking fountains provided an ideal opportunity for education, for praising the delights of water and for promoting the values of temperance'.[113] There is no doubt that Burdett-Coutts' Fountain was presented in an effort to extol the benefits of temperance. 'The drinking cups are of bronze, silver plated on the inside, and on the outside bearing Burton's adage – "Temperance is a bridle of gold"'.[114]

The Temperance Movement started in the early nineteenth century in America and by 1829 had found its way across the Atlantic. The philosophy and teachings of The Temperance Movement were not confined to adults. In his part history, part manual of the movement, Hyslop devotes an entire chapter to children, entitled 'Prevention Better Than Cure' [sic]. In this Hyslop records that:

> The Movement had not advanced very far before it was realized that whilst the work of rescue and prevention amongst the adult population was necessary, it was equally essential that the young and rising generation should be won over to the principle of total abstinence, for if the propaganda was to be completely effective it must aim not simply at repairing ruins, but also seek to lay the foundation upon the super-structure of which might arise a new citizenship free from the entanglements of strong drink.[115]

In 1847 the Juvenile Total Abstinence Movement was inaugurated in Leeds, which was to become better known as the 'Band of Hope'. Mrs Ann Jane Carlile, one of its founders, explained the inspiration for the title, 'as our object is to *band* the children together in societies of their own, and as our *hope* is in the young, let us call their societies Bands of Hope'.[116]

The Bands of Hope were closely linked to the Christian Church and Sunday Schools. *The Economic Syllabus* by Rev G B Charles in 1904

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[113] Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 118.
[114] Anon, 'The Victoria Fountain', *The Illustrated London News*, 5 July 1862.
[115] Hyslop, RM, *The Centenary of The Temperance Movement 1832-1932* (London Independent Press, 1931), p. 27.
[116] Ibid., p. 29.

was one of numerous tracts[117] published that focused on giving instruction in temperance to children under the age of sixteen. Charles' course is divided into eight chapters or lessons, which deal with the benefits of temperance on the home; the family budget; savings; the working man (Figure 18); type of employment; health; crime and citizenship.

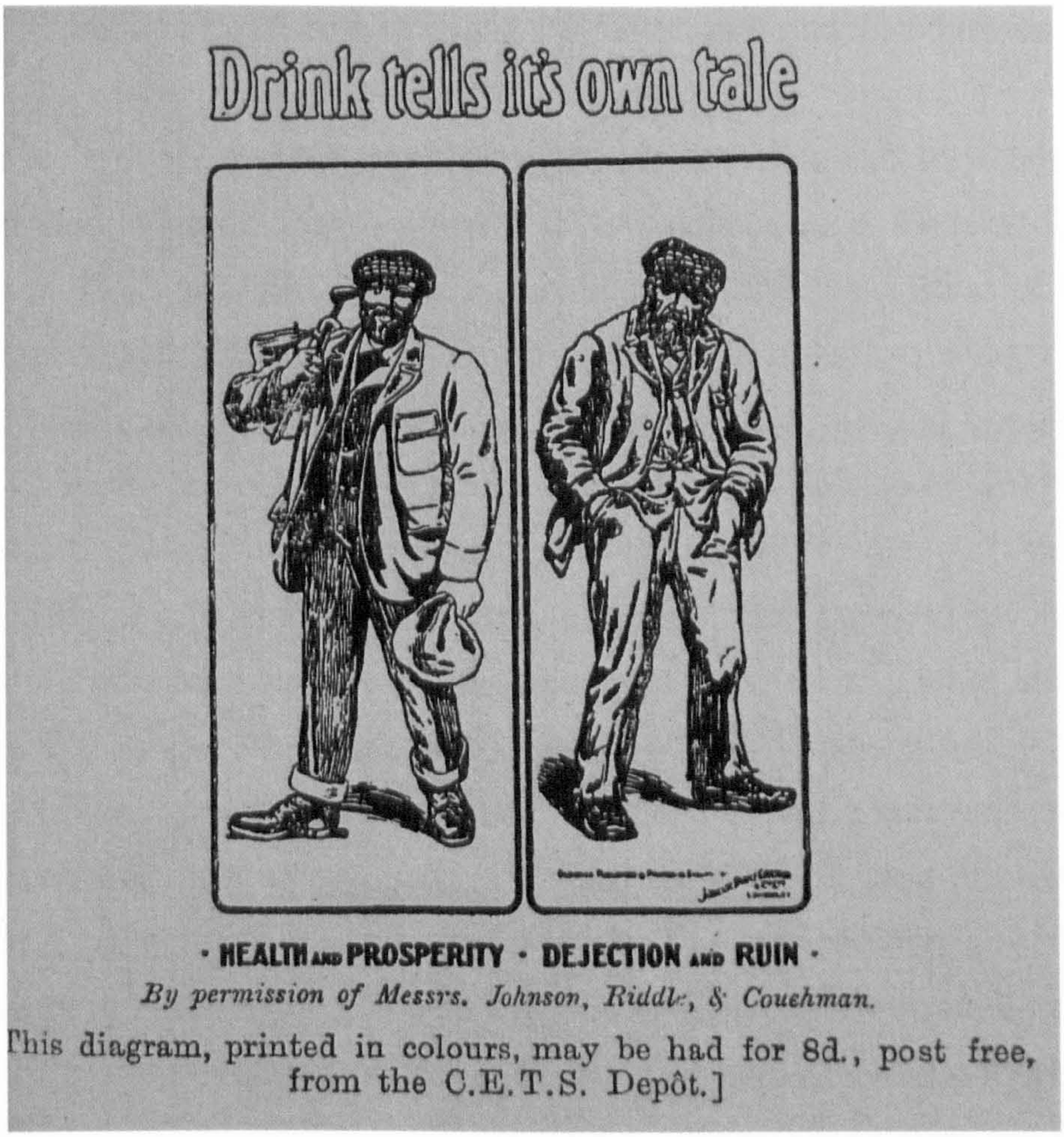

Figure 18: 'Drink tells it's own tale', illustration from *The Economic Syllabus* by Rev G B Charles (1904), Lesson IV, 'The Best Workman', p. 28.

Charles weaves into the eight lessons of his temperance course facts regarding the harm caused to both the individual and society through the excessive consumption of alcohol, for example 'All the accident cases at three large London hospitals one week-end in 1902 were owing in some

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[117] The inside cover of Charles' Tract, *The Economic Syllabus* (Church of England Temperance Society, 1904) lists fourteen other 'Courses of Instruction for Bands of Hope'.

way to drink';[118] that 'Sir Andrew Clark, Senior Physician at the London Hospital, said more than once that seven out of ten patients in that hospital owed their illness to alcohol';[119] that Dr Barnardo had stated that eight out of every ten children sent to him was a result of alcohol;[120] and that 'nearly all the children under 16 who come before the magistrates charged with crime are found to be the children of drunken parents'.[121] Charles concludes that with temperance there would be no workhouses; fewer courts and prisons; a stronger, healthier race and less sickness.[122]

There is no doubt that the Band of Hope was an active society in the area surrounding Victoria Park. Writing of her childhood in Bethnal Green between 1922 and 1937, Doris Bailey recounts the local Band of Hope meetings which 'attracted so many children as to need two sittings. We would queue up for about three quarters of an hour, and the queue was so long by the time the doors opened, that there would be another three hundred or so waiting to get in when we came out'.[123] Bailey describes the meetings as being 'very simple' at which they sang 'lovely hymns about drinking pure water and not yielding to temptation... [and] after the hymns the lights were lowered and we had a story, illustrated by Magic Lantern slides...Nearly always about poor children living in hovels, whose fathers drank away every penny'.[124] Although she clearly enjoyed the meetings, Bailey is quite transparent in that the motivation for her involvement in the Band of Hope was the incentive of the annual party; a perquisite of regular attendance at the weekly Monday evening meetings.

The link between temperance, children, health, parks, education and the Burdett-Coutts' Fountain is thus clear and it seems highly likely that the Fountain itself was designed to reflect the inter-relationship between these. As well as each of the bronze cups of the water fountain being

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[118] Charles, p. 35.
[119] Ibid., p. 35.
[120] Ibid., p. 42.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., p. 50.
[123] Bailey, Doris, *Children of the Green: A True Story of Childhood in Bethnal Green, 1922-1937* (Stepney Books, 1981), p. 48.
[124] Ibid.

engraved with the words, "Temperance is a bridle of gold," the fountain was adorned by four cherubs or putti (Figure 19). Although it has been claimed that these represent the 'conjunction of pure water with innocent and purity of spirit',[125] it also seems probable that the cherubs symbolized the children of the nation and the hopes for them in an alcohol-free society,

> The real "kings" and "princes" of the future are the boys and girls of to-day – the men and women of to-morrow- who will rise to the full capacity of their powers and exercise them for the common weal.[126]

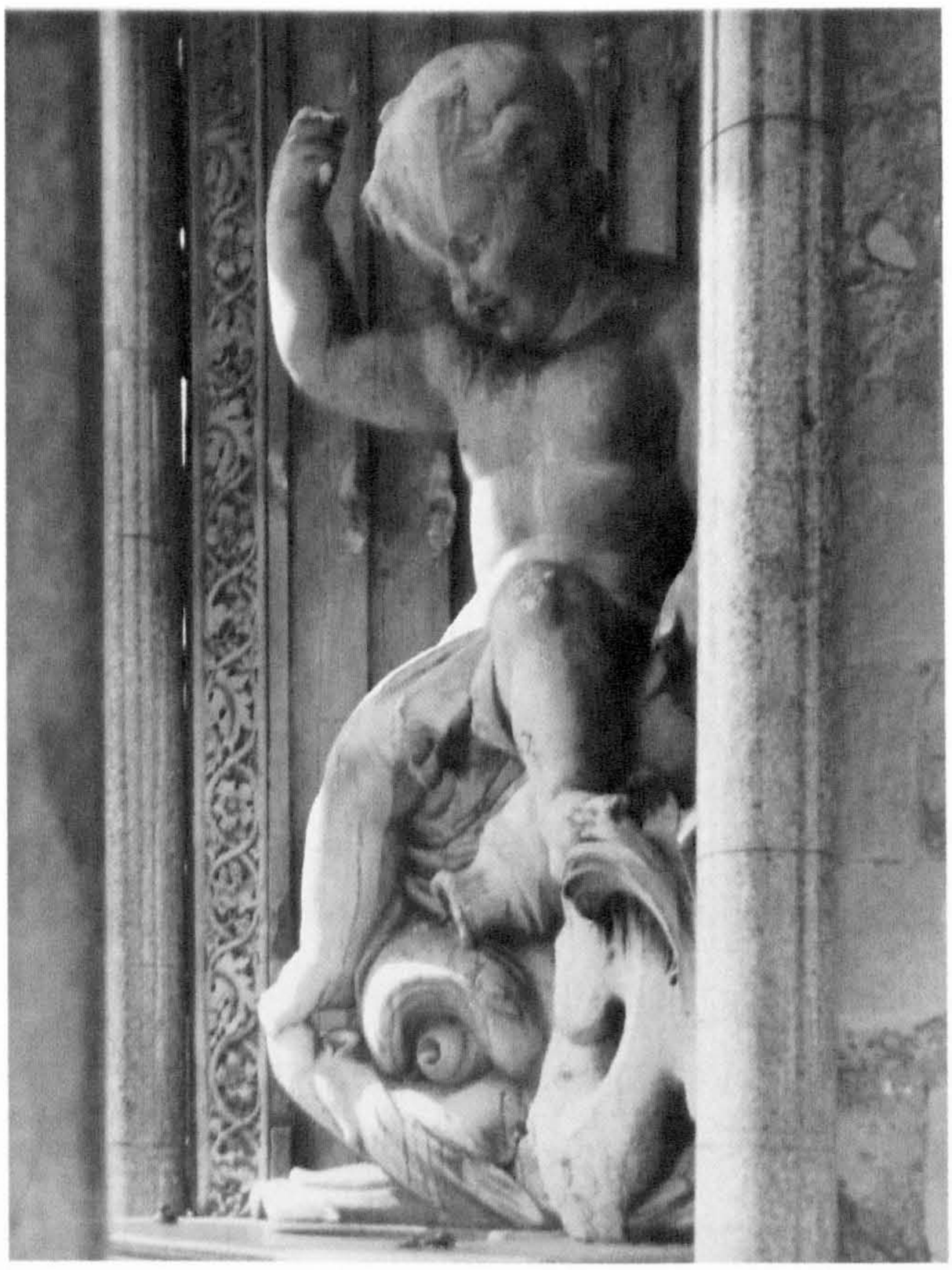

Figure 19: Detail of Burdett-Coutts Fountain (Source: LCC files at LMA). This detail of a putti may be seen as representative of the nation's children.

[125] Malchow, p. 196.
[126] Hyslop, p.32.

2.6 The Park and the Hospital

The link between the park and disease caused by alcohol has been clearly established through research of Burdett-Coutts' Fountain, but this was not the only philanthropic contribution to health connected to the Park. The Park was initially created in part to help alleviate and confine the spread of contagious diseases in the area; the most prevalent of which was tuberculosis which was responsible for one in four deaths in England in 1815. Tuberculosis, which usually attacks the lungs, is spread through the air through, for example, coughing and sneezing, and the cramped living conditions of Victorian London obviously hugely contributed to its spread. In 1854, the German physician Hermann Brehmer introduced the idea that tuberculosis was a curable disease and his establishment of the sanatorium cure provided the first big step toward treatment for tuberculosis. The sanatorium advocated rest and good food, but most importantly afforded to them access to fresh air which was fundamental to treating tuberculosis.

It seems appropriate that a few years after the creation of the Park that the 'unpolluted surroundings of Victoria Park'[127] were deemed suitable as the situation of a hospital that specialised in treating tuberculosis. The City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Heart and Lungs, known locally as 'Victoria Park Hospital',[128] was established in 1855 by a group of Quaker businessmen. It was created in response to 'the very urgent need of the large numbers of people in North and East London who suffered from various diseases of the heart and lungs, and especially from pulmonary tuberculosis, then known as consumption'.[129] Although it is still in existence and 'has always been recognised in the medical and hospital worlds'[130] the hospital was, and still is, comparatively little known to the general public, 'owing perhaps to its position in the midst of the

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[127] Pevsner, p. 54.
[128] Butterworth, Lady, *The Story of a City Hospital* (Unwin, 1925), p. 3.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

working-class population of Bethnal Green'.[131] To rectify this, Lady Butterworth, then President of the hospital's Ladies' Linen League, took it upon herself to produce a 'historical sketch'[132] of the hospital in 1925.

Lady Butterworth's 'modest volume'[133] recording the seventy-five year history of the hospital is a valuable resource in providing archival evidence of the connection between the park and the establishment of the adjacent hospital. Lady Butterworth recounts that the founders of the hospital searched for some time for a suitable area for a hospital, before selecting a four-acre piece of ground adjacent to Victoria Park that was 'suitably open and healthy'.[134] Such a site was suitable as at the start of the twentieth century the most appropriate treatment for tuberculosis was thought to be exposure to fresh air. This subject will be dealt with in more detail in the later chapters dealing with open-air schools and hospital tiles, but it is worth noting that the Victoria Park Hospital utilised the fresh air from the park when it 'substituted open balconies and out-door shelters for closed and over-heated wards. In 1900 two large balconies, each to hold eight beds, were built on the South wing so that this treatment could be thoroughly carried out...Patients remain on these balconies continuously day and night even in the most severe weather and gain great benefit from the treatment'.[135]

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., p. 9.
[135] Ibid., p. 17.

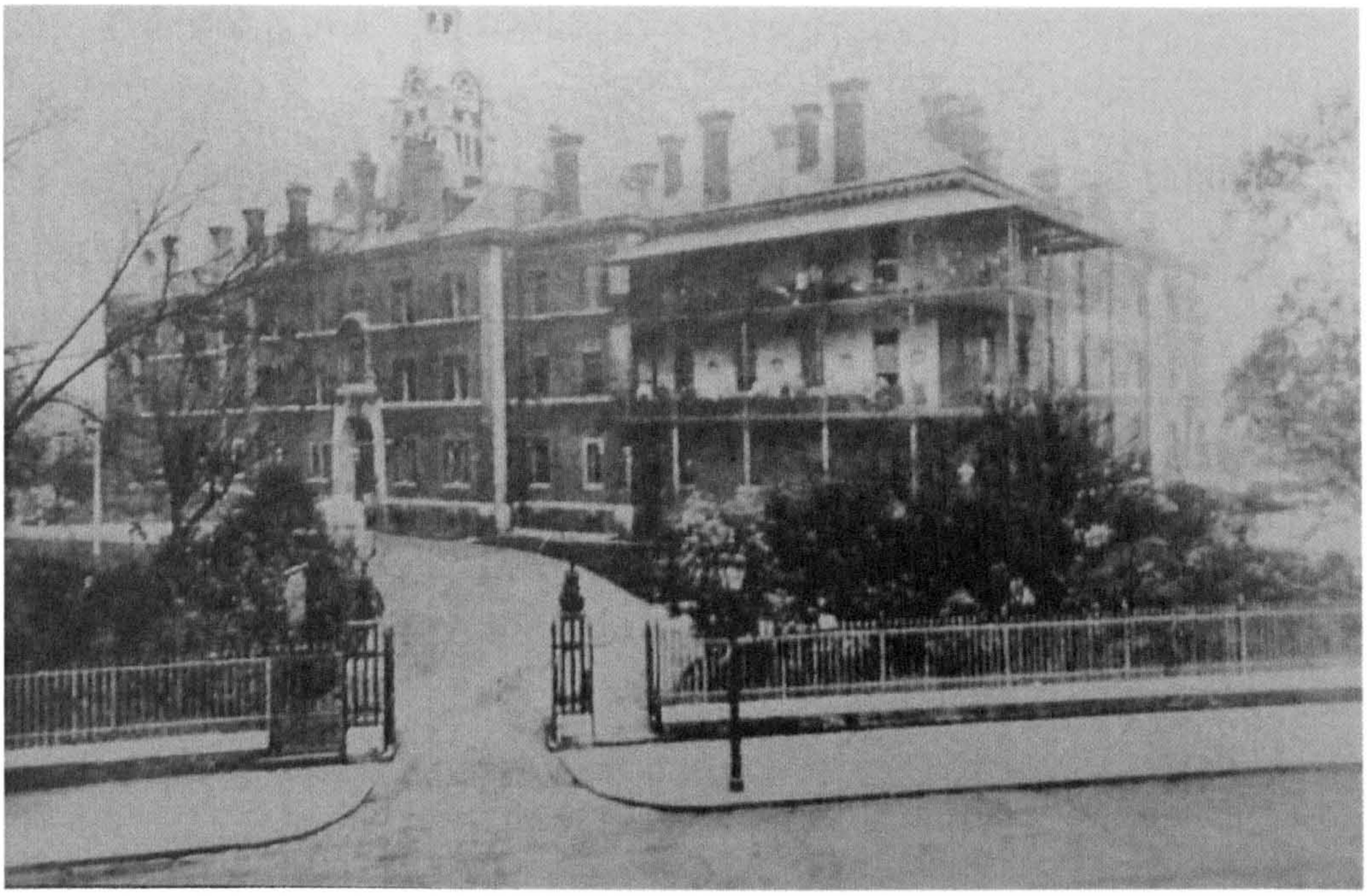

Figure 20: Frontispiece to Lady Butterworth's *The Story of a City Hospital* (1925) illustrating the balconies of the South Wing used for the open-air treatment of tuberculosis circa 1923.

In her history, Lady Butterworth includes photographs of the balconies (Figures 20 and 21) and it is clear from these that children were amongst the patients of the hospital who benefited from open-air treatment on the balconies.

Figure 21: Female patients on open-air balcony at The City of London Hospital for Disease of the Chest circa 1923 (Source: *The Story of a City Hospital*)

2.7 Gymnasiums and Children's Playgrounds

The lakes, swimming pool, water fountain and hospital all illustrate the increased utilisation of the park for the purposes of children's health and recreation. Pennethorne's initial design for the park (Figure 3) clearly illustrates that the original concept of the park was predominantly ornamental, but by the end of the century the space had been adapted and utilised extensively for sport and recreation. Writing on Victoria Park in 1898, J J Sexby noted that the facilities for sport in the park included boating, swimming, 32 cricket pitches, 37 free tennis courts and four gymnasia, two of which were for children.[136]

Instruction for the first gymnasium in the park for adults was given in 1847,[137] and this new gymnasium is clearly depicted in a plan of the park dated 1850 (Figure 22).

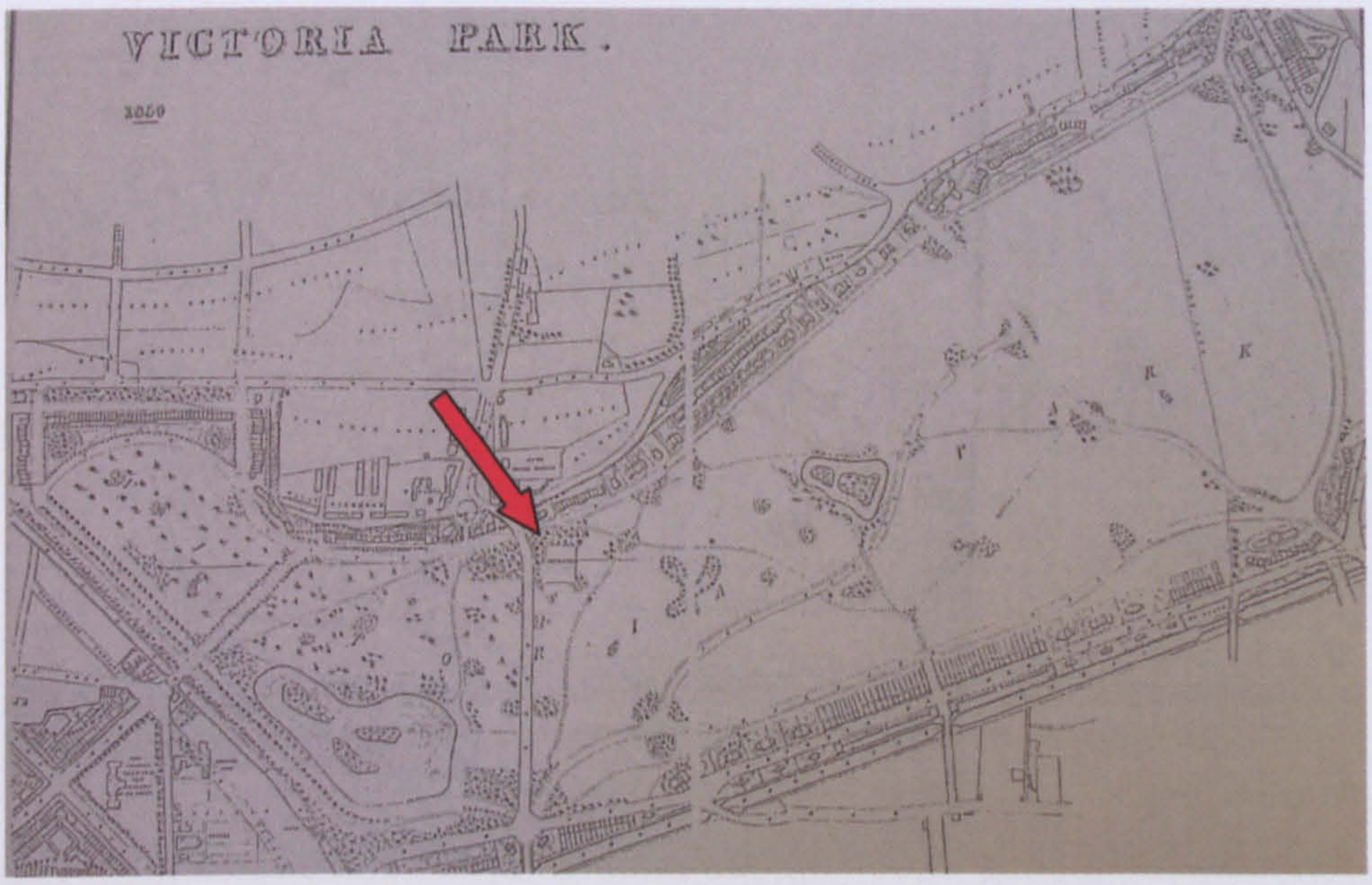

Figure 22: 'Plan of Victoria Park shewing [sic] the contemplated improvements therewith', 1850 (Source: LMA). The men's gymnasium is indicated with a red arrow.

In his MSc Dissertation entitled, *The Evolution of Victoria Park 1841-1851,* Stephen Rettig highlights the motivations for the provision of facilities for adult exercise: 'Recreation was seen not only as a way of

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[136] Sexby, pp. 555-556.
[137] VPP VIm 3, LMA, Samuel Curtis to Commissioners, 20 April 1847.

encouraging the "lower orders" to obtain fresh air, but also as a diversion from revolutionary movements such as Chartism, and as the most important method of providing a counter-attraction to the pub'.[138]

Rettig attempts to source the motivation for the installation of an adult gymnasium at Victoria Park, but simply concludes that 'There are no records that explain why this addition was made'.[139] However, Rettig does identify that a similar gym was erected a few years earlier at Primrose Hill in 1848, as illustrated in *The Illustrated London News* (Figure 23). Although Rettig does not make the connection, it is interesting to note that Pennethorne was the designer for both Primrose Hill and Victoria Park.[140]

Figure 23: 'Illustration of a "Public Gymnasium" erected on Primrose Hill by the Office of Woods in 1848, *Illustrated London News,* 29 April 1848 (Source: Rettig, S, *The Evolution of Victoria Park, 1841-1851).* Note the children climbing on the equipment although this was intended as an adult gymnasium.

Rettig also explores in some depth his theories regarding the inspiration for the formation of public gymnasiums in parks which he attributes to the popularity of gymnastics inspired by Germany[141] and the publication of

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[138] Rettig, Stephen, *The Evolution of Victoria Park 1841-1851,* MSc in the History of Modern Architecture, UCL, 1983, pp. 34-35.
[139] Ibid., p. 33.
[140] Tyack, Geoffrey, *Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[141] Rettig, p. 34.

Donald Walker's *British Manly Exercises* in 1834, which extolled the benefits of exercise: 'Exercises ensure, in particular, the development of all the locomotive organs; and they prevent or correct all the deformities to which these organs are liable. They are best calculated to produce strength and activity and to bestow invariable health'.[142] In his book Walker includes several illustrations of equipment suitable for exercise and states that, 'The necessary fittings-up of an exercise ground are a leaping stand, a vaulting horse, a balancing bar, a climbing stand, with ladders, poles, and ropes'.[143] It is clear that all of these are present in the public gymnasium at Primrose Hill (Figure 23) and it seems likely that this was the inspiration for the design.

A circa 1893 postcard of the adult gymnasium at Victoria Park (Figure 24) illustrates the striking similarity between the adult gymnasium at Victoria Park and that at Primrose Hill.

Figure 24: The Open Air Gymnasium at Victoria Park, circa 1893 (Source: Mernick, p. 47)

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[142] Walker, Donald, *British Manly Exercises* (T Hurst, 1834), p. 2.
[143] Ibid., p. 5.

The gymnasium at Victoria Park proved to be very popular, and Charles Knight observed in his *Cyclopaedia of London* in 1851 that it was 'largely frequented and...the artisans acquit themselves in a really superior manner'.[144]

The formation of a children's gymnasium forty years after the installation of the adult gymnasium was approved by the LCC in April 1890,[145] and was opened in March of the following year.[146] Although the LCC Minutes of Proceedings do not specify the reason for the creation of the children's gymnasium, Poulsen makes an unreferenced claim that it was created in response to children taking over the adult gymnasium. Poulsen states that, 'The aspiring gymnast was discouraged by the hordes of children who swarmed over all the implements, often to their own danger, so a specially built children's gymnasium was later provided for them'.[147] A closer look at the illustration of the gymnasium at Primrose Hill (Figure 23) reveals a number of children clamouring over the apparatus and this gives evidence that Poulsen's claim may well have some justification. Walker also acknowledged the attraction of exercise equipment to youths, and 'the rapid progress it makes in them, and by the delight it derives from them'.[148]

Whatever the inspiration for its creation; the children's gymnasium proved to be a huge success. In 1892, a year after it opened, the council noted, 'we feel that nothing which the Council has done in connection with its parks has been more beneficial than the provision of such places [children's gymnasiums]'.[149]

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[144] Knight, Charles, *Knight's Cyclopaedia of London, 1851* (Charles Knight, 1851), p. 16.
[145] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1890 22 April 1890, Item 19, p. 320.
[146] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1891.
[147] Poulsen, p. 53.
[148] Walker, p. 1.
[149] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1892, p. 120.

Figure 25: Children Playing in Gymnasium 1908 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

As Sexby noted, by 1898 there were two gymnasiums for children. However, boys over the age of ten were excluded from these and this proved to be a matter of some concern. On 20 January 1900, the LCC Minutes of Proceedings noted that as a consequence of their exclusion, 'young lads have to resort to the adults' gymnasiums where they have to associate with grown up persons, some of whom may not be desirable companions for young people'.[150] The proposed solution to this was to restrict the use of one of the two adult gyms at Victoria Park to boys between the ages of ten to fifteen after 9am.

The two main children's gymnasiums were clearly highly popular and extensively used by the local young population. The Council recorded that during the late summer school holidays in 1905 there was a daily average of 5,000 children using the gymnasium near the Royal gate with

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[150] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1900, p. 86.

a further 2,500 children using the other gymnasium near the St Mark's gate.[151]

The transition of the adult gymnasium's into facilities for children continued. In 1913 a further adult gym, at the Bonner Hill entrance to the park, was given over for use by children and the LCC Minutes of Proceedings record: 'Owing to the need for repairs, the men's gymnasium at the Bonner Hill entrance to Victoria-park [sic] has been closed, and, as there does not appear to be any great demand for its continued use by adults, we are of the opinion that it should be adapted for use as a children's gymnasium for which there is a great need'.[152]

Seven years later the last remaining adult gymnasium was given over to children. In 1920 the LCC noted that, 'We think it desirable that steps should be taken for the conversion of the men's gymnasium at Victoria-park into a children's gymnasium'.[153]

The provision for children in the park continued. A scheme was suggested the following year for the organisation of supervised games during that summer.[154] Although this experimental scheme does not appear to be mentioned again in the Minutes, a newspaper article of 1939 makes reference to 'an ashed area at present providing facilities for children's games (including organised games)',[155] which was to be closed that year due to its proximity to the newly built lido, 'the dust from which is a source of inconvenience to the bathers'.[156] Further evidence of supervised games appeared a few years earlier in a newspaper photograph depicting schoolgirls in training (Figure 26).

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[151] LCC Minutes of Proceedings, 1905, 31 October, p. 1474.
[152] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1913, 4 November, p. 905.
[153] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1920, 17 February, p. 271.
[154] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1919, 15 July, pp. 848-9.
[155] Anon, 'Special Works in Parks: Playground in Victoria Park for Elementary Schools', *East End News*, 10 February, 1939.
[156] Ibid.

Figure 26: 'Young East London girl athletes being put through their paces in Victoria Park, in preparation for the East London school sports', *The Star*, 15 May 1936 (Source: Tower Hamlets Archives).

Additional evidence of some level of supervision in the playing areas is also given in Doris Bailey's account of her childhood near Victoria Park from 1922 to 1937. In this Bailey describes the 'swing lady' at Victoria Park:

> There were several lots of swings, each in a well fenced enclosure and presided over by a 'swing lady'. She had a little hut inside the shelter each lot of swings possesses, where she could brew tea, or bandage knees, or chat with her friends, while keeping a watchful eye on the children. Swing ladies must have been chosen for their toughness, their word was law and no one [sic] ever got the better of them. They wore navy hats like the school Nitty Norah, and were equally to be feared. I've seen a swing lady turn everyone out and lock the gates when she saw any misbehaviour. No one ever stood up on her swings and vandalism was a word we'd never heard of. But they were very fair women in their dealings with us, and on a busy day, they'd line us up and time our swinging so that everyone got a turn. There was a big rounder too, a number of thick ropes hanging from a central pivot. Each rope was looped with a metal end.[157]

It is likely that the 'big rounder' that Bailey mentions was also known as 'The Giant Stride', as illustrated in WW Pettigrew's 1937 book, *Municipal Parks: Layout, Management and Administration* (Figure 27).

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[157] Bailey, pp. 63-64.

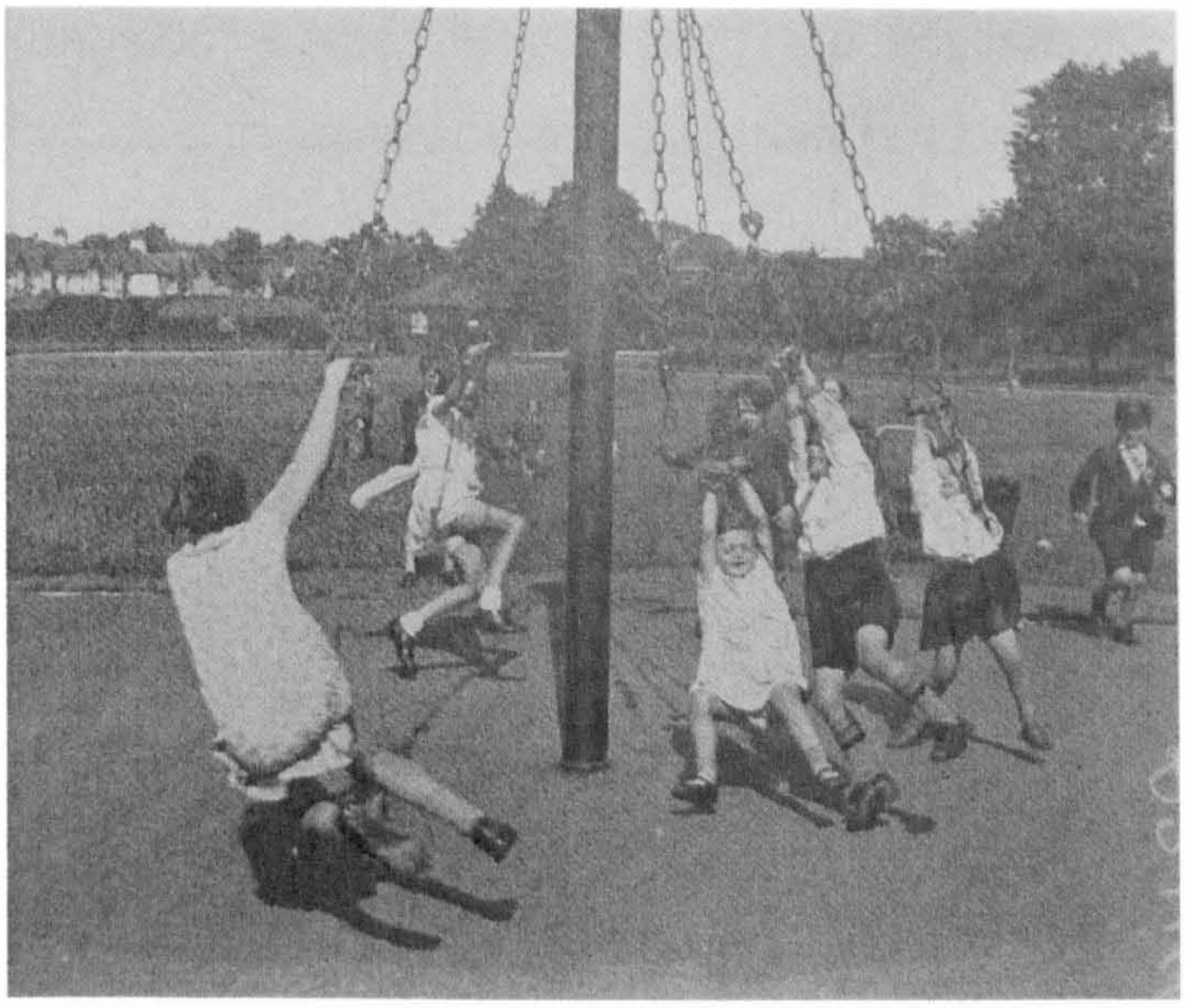

Figure 27: 'Giant Stride' (Source: Pettigrew, WW, *Municipal Parks: Layout, Management and Administration (*1937), Plate V)

A close-up of Figure 25 confirms the presence of a Big Rounder/Giant Stride in the children's gymnasium in 1908.

Figure 28: Detail of Children Playing in Gymnasium 1908, indicating Giant Stride/Big Rounder in the upper left of the photograph (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

It is interesting to note that this piece of equipment bears a striking resemblance to the poles and ropes configuration previously found at the adult gyms at both Primrose Hill (Figure 29) and Victoria Park (Figure 30). This is clear evidence that the inspiration for the equipment in the

children's gymnasium came directly from the equipment in the adult gymnasium that was designed specifically for physical development and exercise.

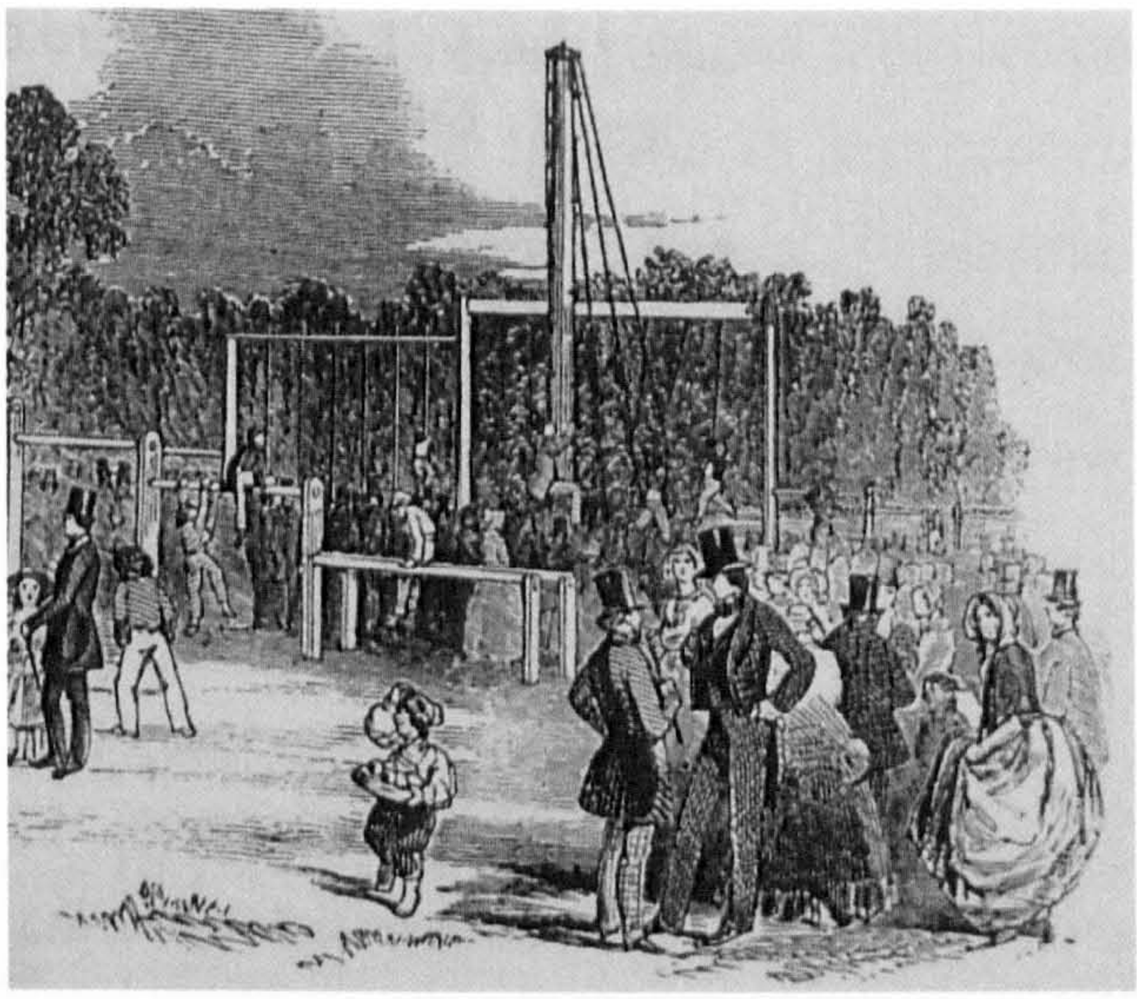

Figure 29: Detail of Rope and Pole equipment (in the centre of the illustration) from 'Illustration of a "Public Gymnasium" erected on Primrose Hill by the Office of Woods in 1848, *Illustrated London News,* 29 April 1848 (Source: Rettig, S, *The Evolution of Victoria Park, 1841-1851)*

Figure 30: Detail of Rope and Pole equipment in Victoria Park Gymnasium, c. 1893 (Source: Mernick, P, *A Pictorial History of Victoria Park,* p. 47)

The guided play of children within parks was not exclusive to Victoria Park. In *Municipal Parks: Layout, Management and Administration,* WW Pettigrew, the Late General Superintendent of Manchester's Parks

Department,[158] devotes an entire chapter to 'The Control of Playgrounds and Playing Fields'.[159] In this chapter he strongly advocates that, 'until a children's playground has a playleader regularly in attendance during the times the ground is occupied by children it is not fulfilling its functions to the greatest advantage'.[160] The advantages that Pettigrew lists are not only increased safety, but also hygiene in the case of sandpits and paddling pools, 'the virtue of unselfishness',[161] playing 'with zest and good humour',[162] and the avoidance of bullying. Despite his clearly stated case for the benefits of supervised play, Pettigrew also advocates that children should be given the opportunity of 'promiscuous play':[163]

> For several centuries past it has been the recognised right of the young people of this realm to play games without let or hindrance on the village green of their district. Since, as has been previously pointed out, the modern public park is the only equivalent to the ancient village green, this fine old tradition of free play for the youth ought not to be lightly interfered with.[164]

Whilst many facilities were provided in Victoria Park for children, the ample space within the park certainly provided many opportunities for 'free play' by the local children and this is recorded in a postcard depicting children playing in the park (Figure 31).

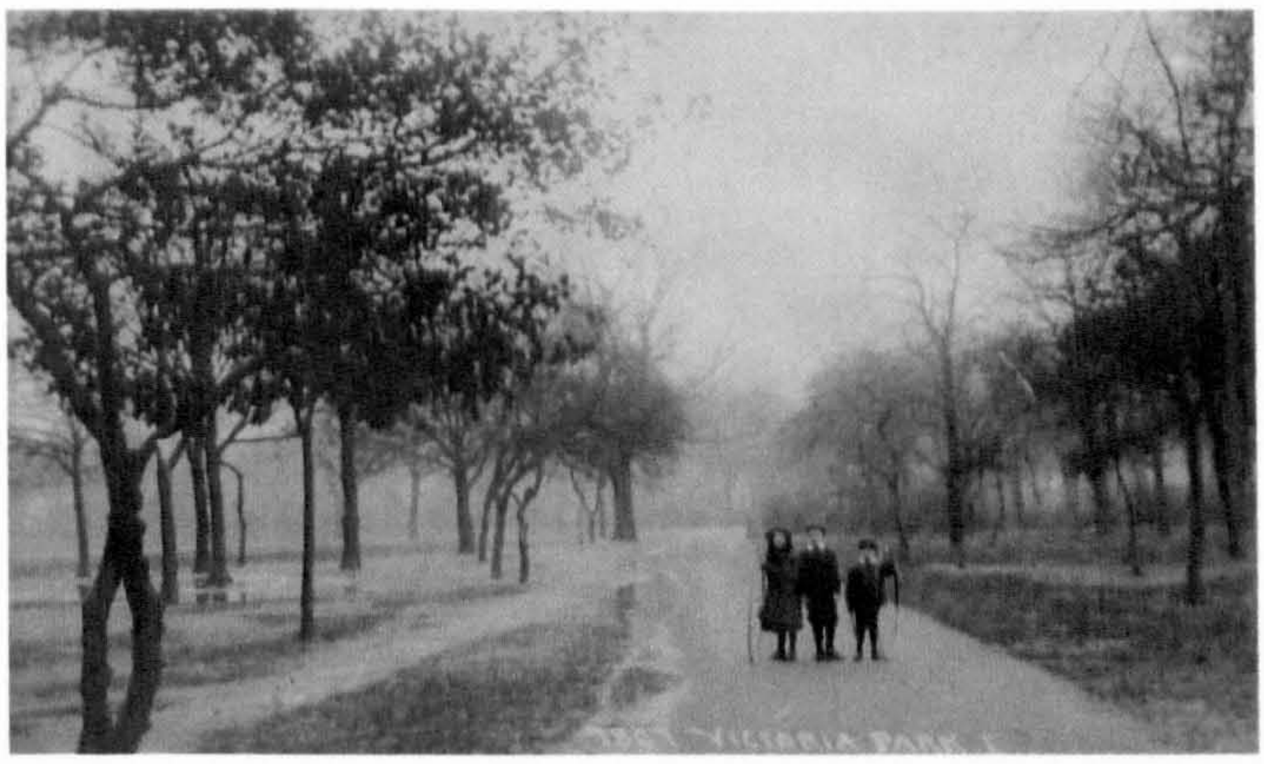

Figure 31: Postcard of Children Playing in Victoria Park, dated 1889 (unclear). (Source: Tower Hamlets Archives).

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[158] Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks* (The Journal of Park Administration Ltd, 1937), Frontispiece.
[159] Ibid., Chapter XV, 'The Control of Playgrounds and Playing Fields', pp. 92-99.
[160] Ibid., p. 92.
[161] Ibid., p. 93.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., p. 94.
[164] Ibid., p. 95.

In his book, Pettigrew also includes a chapter on 'The Construction and Equipment of Children's Playgrounds'. In this, Pettigrew reinforces the potential of parks for the education and health of children and states that the park should be

> ...made as attractive as possible, both from the aesthetic and educational point of view as well as from the sport and pastimes standpoint. This is as it should be, for if they are to fulfil their highest objective, then it is essential that every clean, healthy and intellectual attraction that can be provided within reason should find a place in parks. Right and varied equipment will always furnish a powerful incentive to the inhabitants in large towns to spend a considerable portion of their spare time in the public parks...In this endeavour to make municipal parks attractive and healthfully useful to all sections of the inhabitants one of the first and most important considerations is the needs of the children. It is a wise civic policy to inculcate the "use-the-park" habit while children are young and so for all time give them a real love for, and appreciation of, the parks and open spaces of their city.[165]

Pettigrew further argues that well-equipped playgrounds 'serve two most useful social purposes; they attract young people away from the dangers of the streets and at the same time keep them out of the way of mischief, which so frequently leads them into the Juvenile Courts'.[166]

It becomes apparent that the development of the children's gymnasiums or playgrounds in Victoria Park reflects many of the contemporary attitudes towards children and for their welfare and education. Although the children's gymnasium was initially created as a means of keeping children out of the adult gymnasium, it proved to create an opportunity for physical exercise for children, as well as developing their social skills.

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[165] Ibid., 13-14.
[166] Ibid., p. 15.

2.8 The Sand Pit

Writing in 1937 Pettigrew stated that the ideal modern playground should include 'light swings, giant strides, joy-wheels, coaster slides and ocean wave slides, with rocking horses, paddling pools and sand gardens, for children under school age'.[167] It would appear that the first sand garden in England was created at Victoria Park in the children's gymnasium, and it clearly captured the public's – and children's – imagination.

In 1892 the LCC noted that, 'We have had under consideration the question of providing, as an experiment, a sea-sand pit in the children's gymnasium in Victoria-park. We think that the formation of the pit would be a source of great pleasure to children'.[168] The LCC Minutes give no clue as to the inspiration for installing a sea-sand pit, but it seems probable that there was a strong connection with the popularity of visiting the British coast that had started from the mid-nineteenth century.[169] Once the domain of the unhealthy visiting to immerse themselves in the mineral seawater, coastal towns were increasingly taken over by families who arrived on the Victorian-established railways to escape the industrialism of the towns and enjoy the delights of being beside the seaside.

As Conway notes, the installation of the sand pit, along with the subsequent paddling pools and goat-cart rides at the turn of the century, 'extended park facilities to the needs of very young children'.[170] This is clearly illustrated by their plentiful presence in Figure 32. It is evident from this photograph that the popularity of the sandpit and the number of children who used it would inevitably have encouraged social interaction between the children.

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[167] Ibid.
[168] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1892, 20 December, p. 1250.
[169] The author's thanks and acknowledgement go to Dr Clare Hickman of Bristol University for drawing attention to the link between sand-pits and The Victorian Seaside.
[170] Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 197.

Figure 32: The Children's Sandpit at Victoria Park c: 1898 (Source: Sexby, JJ, *The Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London,* p. 557)

The sand-garden was a great success and a number of writers wrote about it.

Sexby describes children 'digging in the sandpit, apparently quite as happy as though they were within sight and sound of the sea-waves,[171] whilst Amherst viewed the sandpit as 'a delight',[172] and further observed:

> What gives most pleasure is the sand-garden for little children. For hours and hours these small mites are happily occupied digging and making clean mud pies, while their elders sit by and work. It is touching to see the miniature castles and carefully patted puddings at the close of a busy baby's day. In the summer, when the sand is too dry to bind, some of the infants bring small bottles, which they managed to get filled at the drinking fountain, and water their little handfuls of sand. These children's sand-gardens, common in parks in the United States, are a delightful invention for the safe amusement of these small folk... Many of the parks and some of the commons now have their "sea-side" or "sand-pit," and probably not only do they give immense pleasure, but they act as a safety valve for small mischievous urchins, who otherwise could not resist trespassing on flower-beds.[173]

Although she makes no reference to it, and may in all likelihood have been oblivious to it, Amherst's description illustrates that playing in the sand-pit would have certainly developed the dextrous ability of young children. The concept of using play to physically, and indeed mentally, develop young children was primarily developed by Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852) a German educator who created kindergartens and

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[171] Sexby, *The Municipal Parks ,Gardens and Open Space of London,* p. 556.
[172] Amherst, p. 139.
[173] Ibid., pp. 163-164.

recognised the importance of activities for small children and their learning process. Froebel particularly stressed the potential benefits that gardens and gardening could have for small children (which will be explored further in the work of the Open-Air Schools and Margaret McMillan in Chapters 4 and 5), as well as the ways in which materials such as clay and sand could be utilised to develop the physical and motor skills of young children. Frobel opened his first Kindergarten in Germany in 1840 and by 1851 the concept had spread to Hampstead when the England Infant Garden opened. It has seems unlikely that there was a conscious link on the part of the LCC between Froebel's work and the installation of the sand-pit, but nonetheless it certainly demonstrates that concepts regarding the education of young children were filtering into the mainstream.

The popularity of the sand-pit at Victoria Park was also captured by E V Lucas in his 1906 book, *A Wanderer in London,* in which he described the sandpit in summer as being, 'more populous than an ant hill and the most successful practical amelioration of a hard lot that had been known'.[174]

However not everyone was a fan of the sand-garden. Doris Bailey recalls of Victoria Park that: 'There was a sand pit there but it was a bit grubby, and surrounded by a climbing wall of concrete to look like a castle, it was always crowded with boys. So there was not much point in playing there, trying to pretend it was the seaside'.[175]

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[174] Lucas, E V, *A Wanderer in London* (Methuen, 1906), p. 202.
[175] Bailey, p. 64.

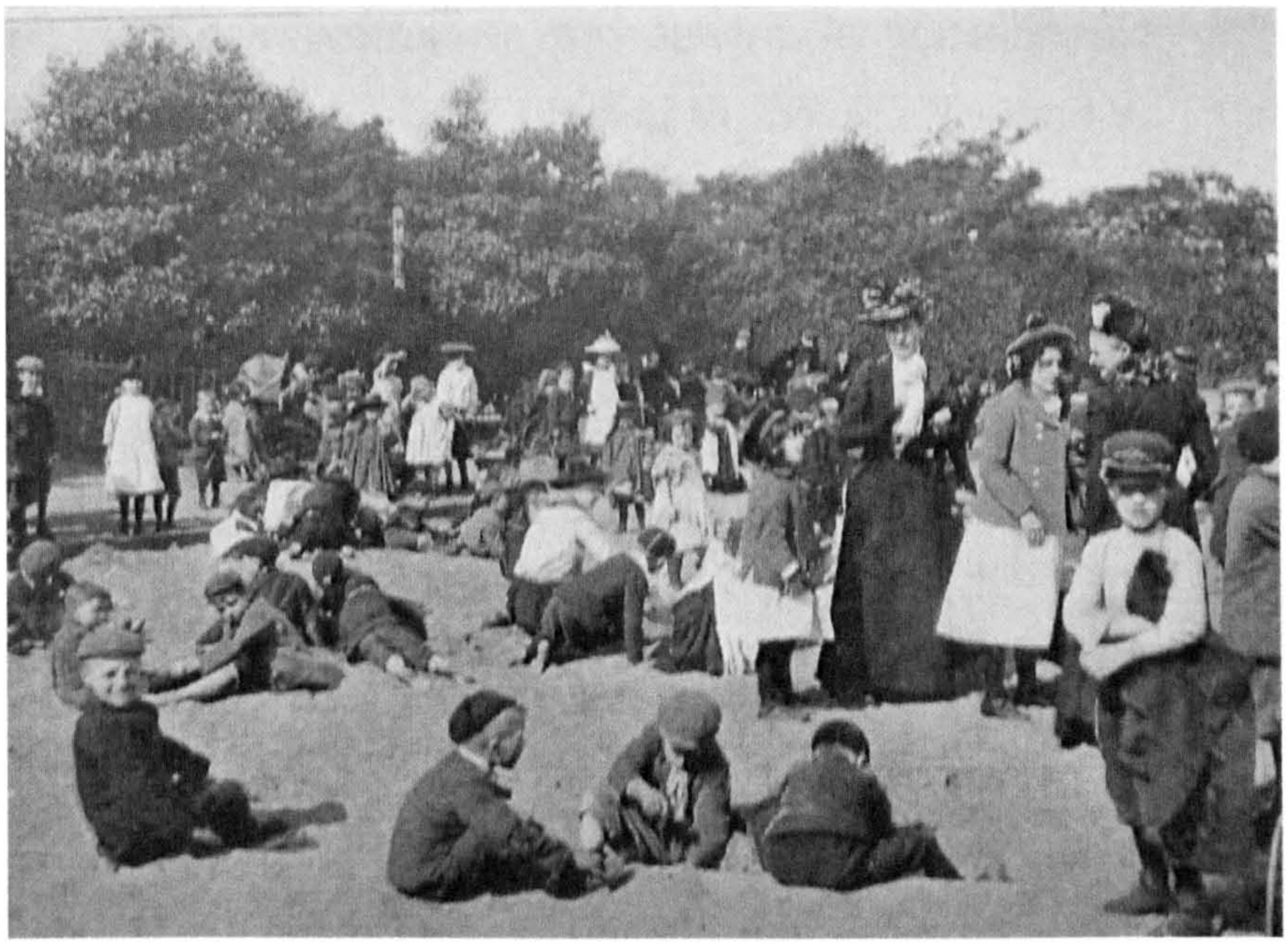

Figure 33: The Sandpit c. 1902 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives). Note how young boys appear to have replaced babies as the main users of the sandpit.

Certainly a comparison of a photograph of the sandpit in 1898 (Figure 32) with one taken six years later (Figure 33) reinforces Bailey's comments regarding the popularity of the sand-garden with boys in particular, although it has not been possible to source any photographs that illustrate the climbing wall she describes. This may have been a later, temporary addition, or it may be that Bailey's recollections of the sandpit are slightly inaccurate.

George Bernard Shaw set his stage play, *Candida*, which was first performed in 1900, close to Victoria Park. In his detailed opening stage directions, he mentions both the park and the sandpit.

> A fine October morning in the north east quarter of London, a vast district miles away form the London of Mayfair and St James's...This desert of unattractiveness has its oasis. Near the outer end of the Hackney Road is a park of 217 acres, fenced in, not by railings, but by a wooden paling, and containing plenty of greensward trees, a lake for bathers, flower beds which are triumphs of the admired cockney art of carpet gardening, and a sandpit, originally imported from the seaside for the delight of children, but speedily deserted on its coming a natural vermin preserve for all the petty fauna of Kingsland, Hackney and Hoxton.[176]

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[176] Shaw, Bernard, *Candida* (Constable, 1913), pp. 79-80.

Whether there was vermin in the sandpit is questionable. It seems unlikely as by 1905 the LCC elected to install a second sandpit in the gymnasium near St Mark's gate. Furthermore, Poulsen states that in 1906 the LCC's chemist thoroughly examined the sand and found no traces of living vermin and that a further bacteriological analysis proved that there was no pathogenic organisms in the sand.[177] However, there was clearly some cause for concern regarding the hygiene of sandpits in general, as Pettigrew highlighted in 1937:

> In the case of sand gardens, which need not be more than from 90 to 100 square yards in extent and 15 to 18 inches deep, they should be fenced in and only open to children when a play-leader (preferably a young woman) is present to look after them. These two precautions are essential to their success, for without close supervision they would be almost certain to become insanitary, and instead of being a boon to the children they might easily became a menace to their health. As an additional safeguard to prevent the pollution of the sand, it should be turned over and exposed to the influence of the sun and air daily and disinfected twice a week with an approved disinfectant.[178]

Although it was only introduced as an 'experiment' by the LCC in Victoria Park, sand gardens became a popular addition to parks and gardens all over London (Figure 34). In her book 1927, *The London Child,* Evelyn Sharp noted that, 'Wherever a patch of sand has been deposited for the purpose, you will find it covered with small diggers, digging as if for their lives. In Poplar or in Kensington, in an oasis among docks or under the shelter of a King's palace, these absorbed young builders may be found digging and heaping up and pulling down again'.[179]

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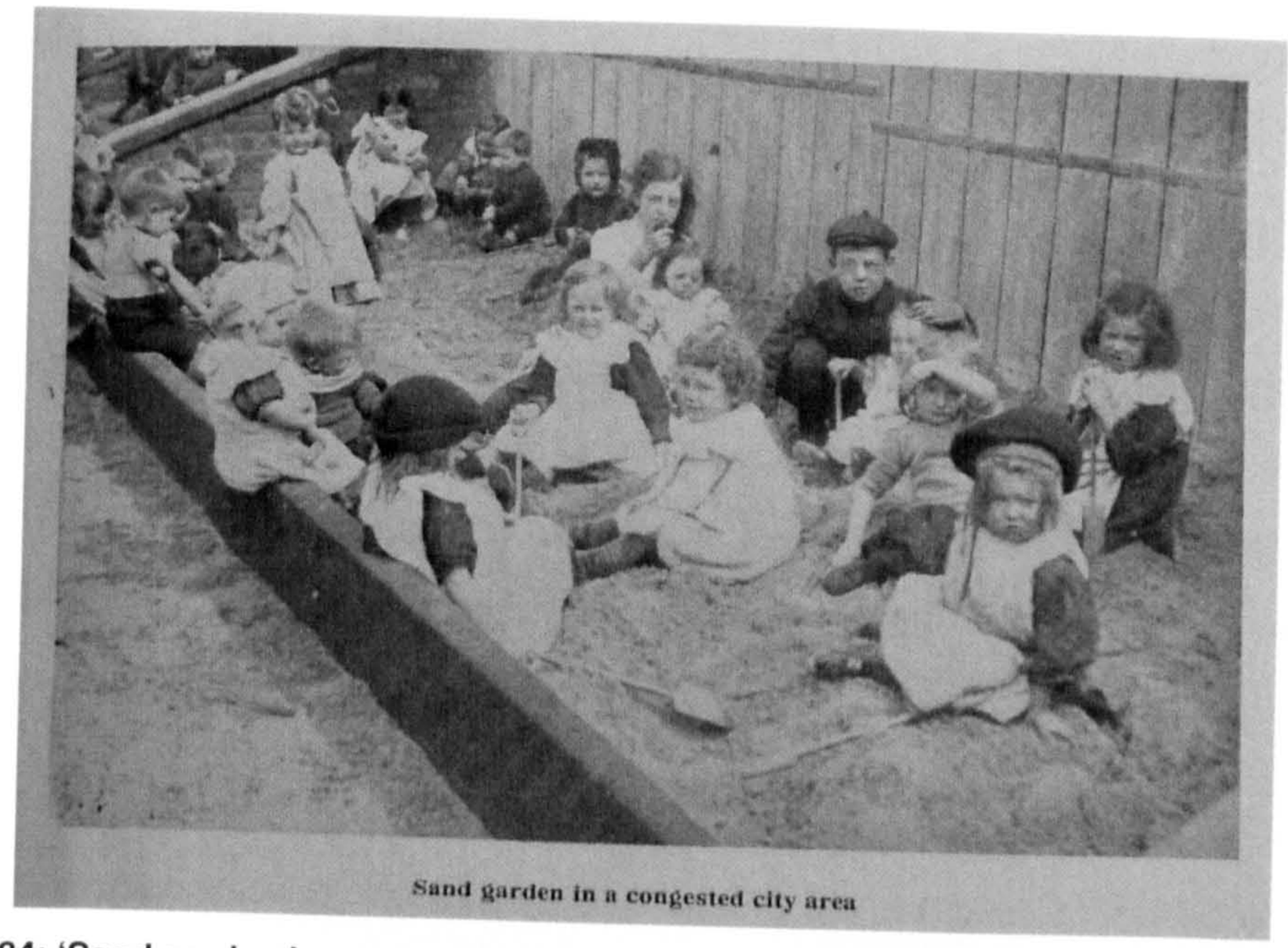
[177] Poulsen, p. 70.
[178] Pettigrew, p. 16.
[179] Sharp, Evelyn, *The London Child* (John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, 1927), p. 95.



Sand garden in a congested city area

Figure 34: 'Sand garden in a congested city area' (Source: Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks*, Plate V)

2.9 Animals in the Park

Birds and animals were an educational feature of the Park almost from the beginning. When Pennethorne originally submitted his plans for the ornamental lake in the south-west corner of the park in 1846 (Figure 5), he cited that one of the benefits of it would be 'the good effect which rational amusements produce upon the lower classes'.[180] One of these 'amusements' was the introduction of waterfowl, 'for ornament and to provide a subject for popular education'.[181]

Figure 35: 'The Boating Lake on a Sunday Morning in 1900' (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

The introduction of animals and birds other than waterfowl at Victoria Park has been attributed to the first chairman of the LCC Parks Committee from 1889, Lord Meath. An LCC guidebook acknowledges:

> To Lord Meath the public are indebted for originating the idea of having animals and birds, apart from waterfowl, placed in various parks, and the idea has been greatly fostered by the Parks Committee. Before Lord Meath carried his motion the only animal life in the parks consisted of a few waterfowl at Finsbury-park, Victoria-park, and Battersea-park; now there is not only an exceptionally good supply of waterfowl at every enclosed park where there is water, but also several aviaries for British birds…Some deer, which were presented to the Council, are to be seen in Clissold-park and also at Battersea and Victoria parks. At the latter place there are also goats, and guinea-pigs are exhibited at Victoria, Ravenscourt, and Clissold parks...At five of the places the birds are so numerous as to necessitate the employment of a special attendant, viz., Battersea, Dulwich, Southwark, Victoria, and Finsbury parks.[182]

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[180] Victoria Park Papers at LMA, Vlm 1.
[181] GLC Leaflet on Victoria Park.
[182] Sexby, JJ, *London County Council Note Book of the Parks, Gardens, Recreation Grounds, and Open Spaces of London,* pp. 32-33.

The deer referred to in the LCC guidebook were introduced into Victoria Park as a matter of practicality. The LCC Minutes of Proceedings in 1894 record that the deer enclosure at nearby Clissold Park was no longer large enough to accommodate all of the deer and so it was suggested that some of these be moved to Victoria Park. It was noted that, 'The expense will be slight but the enjoyment afforded to the public, if one may judge by the result at Clissold-park, will be very great'.[183]

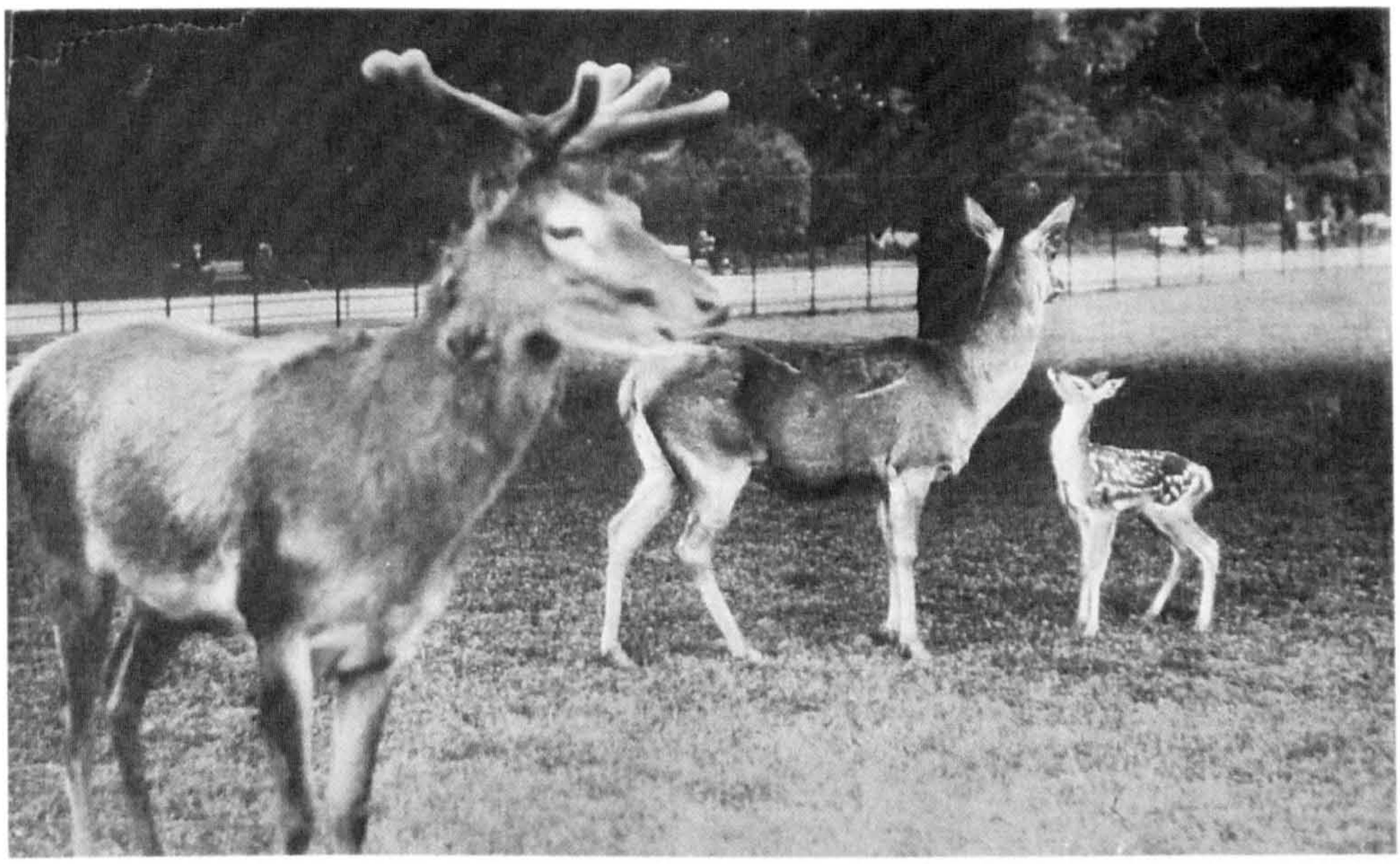

Figure 36: 'A Cockney Deer in Victoria Park', *The Sphere,* 24 June 1933 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

The deer were the first of a number of other animals that were soon also introduced into the park. Writing four years later, Sexby stated that:

> Another feature which is very popular with the children is the introduction of animal and bird life in the park. A recently-erected aviary contains a varied selection of English birds, such as pigeons and doves, chaffinches, linnets, greenfinches, and a pair of golden pheasants. But perhaps the guinea-pigs afford most amusement to the youngsters. There are goats in a rockery by themselves, and another enclosure for deer.[184]

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[183] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1894, 24 July, p. 858.
[184] Sexby, *The Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London,* pp. 556-557.

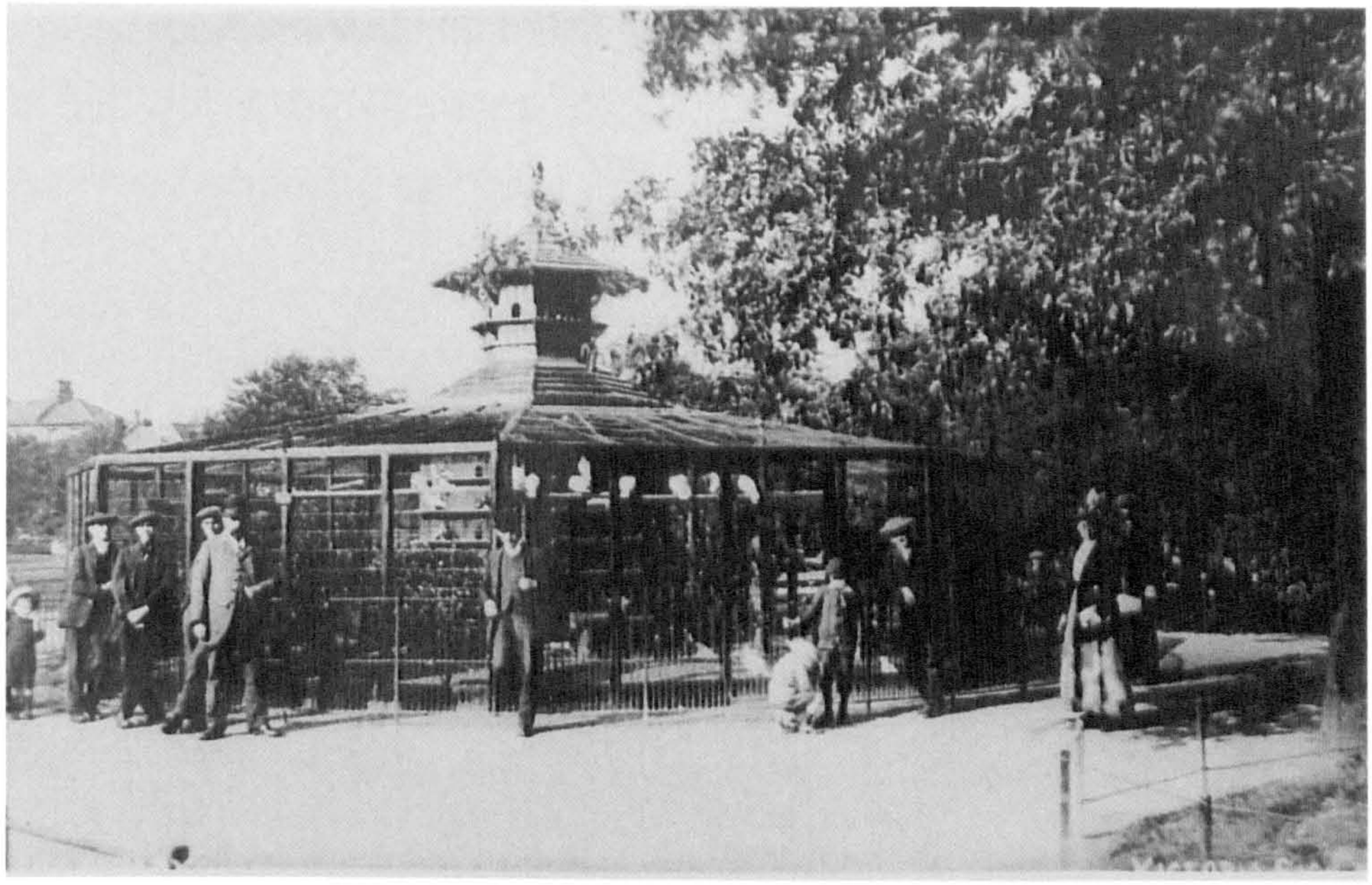

Figure 37: The Aviary at Victoria Park, c. 1910 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives). Although the park is flat, this area was known as 'Pretty Polly Hill'.

The site of the aviary (Figure 37) became locally known as 'Pretty Polly Hill'.[185] The 'Pretty Polly' of the location is mentioned by both Harry Blacker and Doris Bailey in the memoirs of their East End childhoods.[186] Blacker recalls that there was 'a large white cockatoo chained to a precarious perch, [that] would screech and spread its wings'.[187] Bailey further elaborates that the cockatoo was 'supposed to be a wonderful talker. It could swear too, but I never heard it say anything other than "Pretty Polly".'[188] Whilst Sexby records the amusement of the animals for children they were also regarded as educational. The Victorian interest in natural science is well known, and Conway puts forward that the animals in Victoria Park, 'combined education with entertainment'.[189]

The introduction of animals and birds at Victoria Park was neither ground-breaking nor unique. Perhaps the most well-known menagerie in London is London Zoo at Regent's Park, which started as an educational facility for members of the Zoological Society of London founded in 1824 and became open to the public in 1847. Writing in 1907, Alicia Amherst

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[185] Mernick, p. 68.
[186] Blacker and Bailey.
[187] Blacker, p. 48.
[188] Bailey, p. 63.
[189] Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 197.

illustrated the popularity of a visit to London Zoo by asking, 'What London child has not spent moments of supreme joy mingled with awe on the back of the forbearing elephant'?[190]

[190] Amherst, p. 100.

2.10 Plants for Children and the 'Botany in Parks' Scheme

As well as fauna, Victoria Park was particularly noted for its floral displays, although this cannot be attributed to Pennethorne. Samuel Curtiss (1779-1860) was appointed horticulturalist and park supervisor in 1842, although his stay was somewhat short-lived due to a dispute regarding an accusation of his ordering poor-quality plants.[191] It was his replacement, John Gibson (1815-1875), who served his apprenticeship under Paxton at Chatsworth, who takes credit for laying out the formal beds of the Park and for filling them with bedding plants. Gibson was also later involved with the management of Greenwich Park, Hyde Park, the Central Royal Parks and Battersea Park.

In 1851 Charles Knight wrote of the planting at Victoria Park in his guide-book to London, and observed that, 'At present it exhibits a bare and on cold days a bleak aspect, from the paucity of trees and foliage',[192] but by 1877, Nathanial Cole observed:

> The magnificent display of flowers...is equal to anything seen in and about London. The designs and planting are varied and excellent – examples of good taste, which afford delight to all beholders...This park possesses horticultural attractions in no small degree, and maintains the first position for flowers in spring, summer and autumn.[193]

Cole gives a very comprehensive list of planting the park, including a planting scheme for the scroll bed in Victoria Park (Figure 38).[194] A further list of plants in the park was also recorded in 1908 by Kate Hall.[195]

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[191] Mernick, p. 42.
[192] Knight, p. 16..
[193] Cole, pp. 27-28.
[194] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[195] Hall, Kate M, *Nature Rambles in London* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), pp. 305-317.

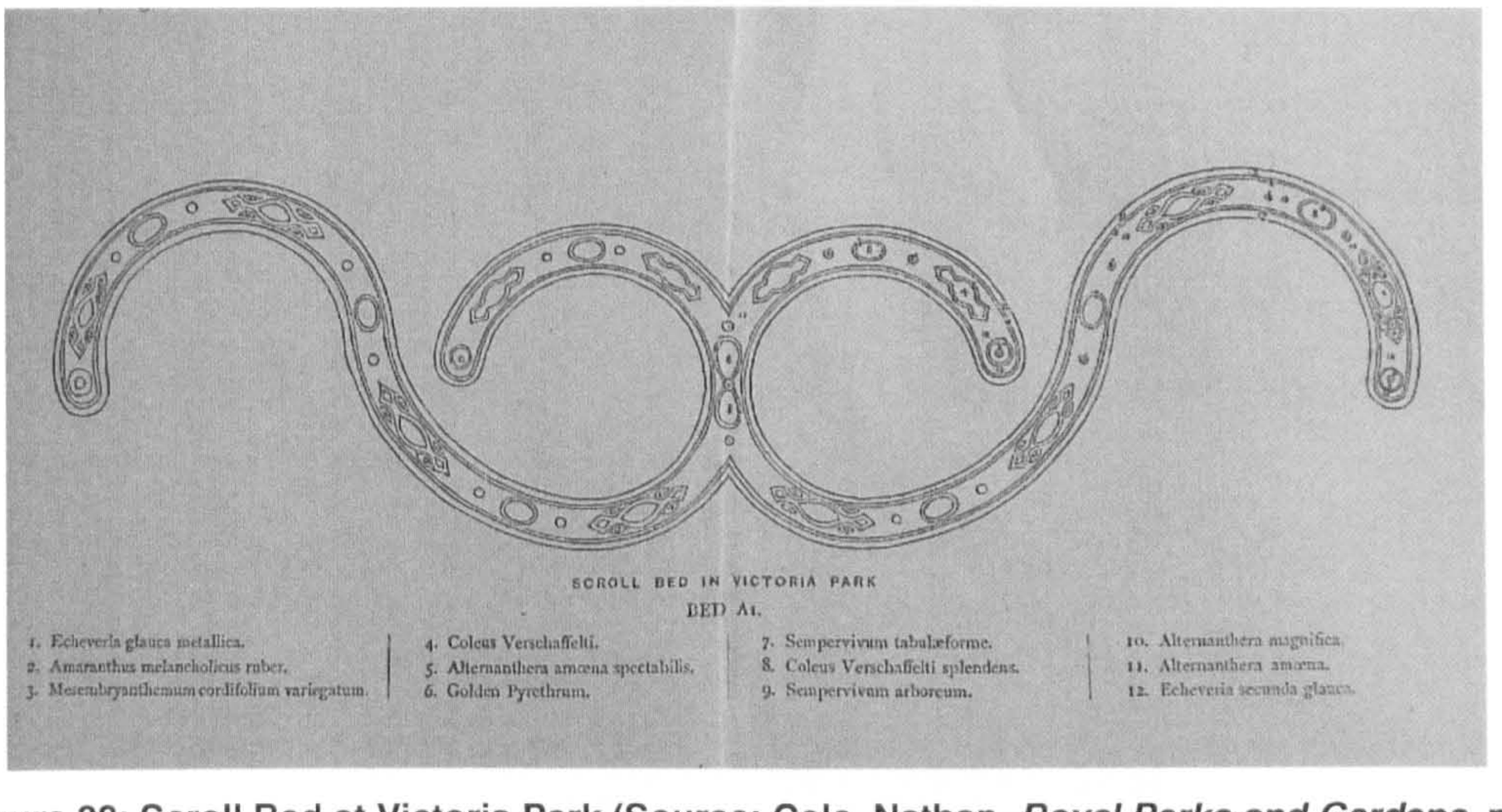

Figure 38: Scroll Bed at Victoria Park (Source: Cole, Nathan, *Royal Parks and Gardens*, pp. 28-29.)

Cole suggests that the plants within the park were an inspiration for the local public to become involved in gardening themselves. This was further encouraged through a scheme of distributing the old bedding plants from London parks to the public. The *Penny Illustrated Paper* records in October 1891:

> Her Majesty's First Commissioner of Works has for some years past been the means of brightening many poor London homes by granting the superintendents of the public parks permission to distribute the plants freely towards the close of autumn ...It only remains to add that those who would share in the free distribution of plants should apply betimes to the superintendent of the nearest park.[196]

This newspaper article was accompanied by an illustration depicting the distribution of plants (Figure 39). This illustration, which clearly shows the participation of children in the scheme, was used a number of times in other newspapers, and provides evidence that the scheme took place over a number of years.[197] Another newspaper article in 1933 again clearly depicts the involvement of children in the scheme (Figure 40).

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[196] Anon, 'Free Plants in London', *Penny Illustrated Paper,* 24 October 1891.
[197] For example, this illustration also appeared in *The Illustrated London News,* 8 November 1879.

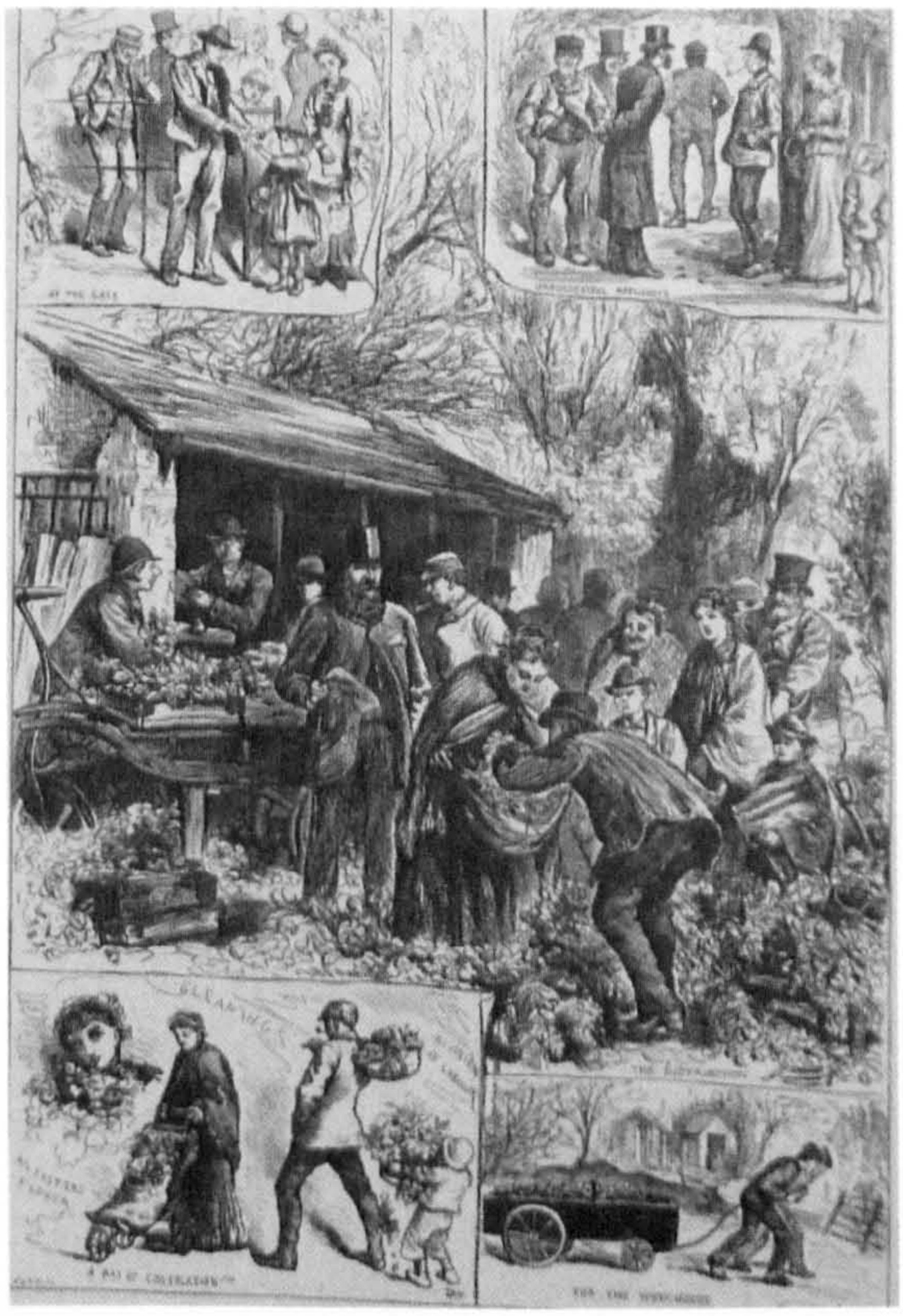

Figure 39: An Illustration from 'Free Plants in London', *Penny Illustrated Paper,* 24 November 1891 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History and Archives Library). Note the presence of children in each of the five sketches.

Figure 40: 'Children who took advantage of to-day's autumn distribution of surplus plants in Victoria Park, E.', *The Evening Standard,* 14 October 1933 (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

Given the emphasis on planting in the park, the evidence of children participating in the distribution of free plants and the increased provision of facilities for children it seems almost inevitable that a scheme for

educating children in horticulture and botany would be established. In his history of Victoria Park, Poulsen puts forward that there was a 'plan to co-ordinate the park with the work of the local schools, begun in 1898. This took the form of a group of twenty flower beds, each displaying specimens of one of the botanical orders. They were to be used by elementary and secondary schools for instruction in practical botany, and an illustrated guidebook was published'.[198]

Poulsen has very clearly made his assumption of the scheme being implemented based on a proposition in the LCC Minutes of Proceedings. In May 1898, under the heading, 'Botany in Parks', the LCC noted that the Parks and Open Spaces Committee and the Technical Education Board had considered a report 'on the practicability of laying out plots of ground in certain parks in such manner as will afford assistance to scholars of elementary and secondary schools in the study of practical botany'.[199] It was suggested 'about 20 rods of ground...[be] devoted to the cultivation for school purposes of hardy typical plants belonging to 20 natural orders',[200] and that these be by a path for the convenience of access by school groups. The Minutes listed the twenty suggested orders to be included and stated that each plant should be labelled with both the common and Latin name. The Minutes also suggested that a botanical guide to the parks be published under the superintendence of the Technical Education Board and the Parks Committee jointly. The three parks that were to be a part of this scheme were Battersea, Ravenscourt and Victoria. The Minutes concluded by saying that, 'Some further suggestions were made, but we think it would be better in the first instance to deal with the subject quite in the sense of an experiment; and if later on it should prove to be resulting advantageously to the schools, possibly the arrangements might be extended to the cultivation of important types of the lower orders of plants, such as fungi, mosses,

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[198] Poulsen, p. 106.
[199] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1898, 17 May, p. 584.
[200] Ibid.

ferns, liverworts, &c., &c., and facilities might be afforded for the study of aquatic plants'.[201]

Victoria Park was by no means the first park in London to accommodate botanical gardens that were utilised for the education of children. The Royal Botanic Society was established in Regent's Park in 1839 and had strong links with education, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Providing gardens as potential settings for the learning of nature can be traced back further to John Claudius Loudon (1783 – 1843), the Scottish botanist, garden and cemetery designer and garden magazine editor. He strongly advocated that public gardens could be simultaneously utilised as settings for botanical studies. Loudon put this theory into practice by, for example, placing name tags on the trees in Derby Arboretum, which he designed in 1840, and allowing free entry on Wednesday and Sundays.

It is difficult to find anything other than oblique references to the botany scheme at Victoria Park following its suggestion in 1898. There is no further mention of the scheme in the Minutes for at least the next forty years. It has also not been possible to find any 'botanical guide to the parks',[202] with the exception of a guide book entitled *Battersea Park as a Centre for Nature Study* by Walter Johnson, which was 'Published under the Direction of the Battersea and Wandsworth Council' in 1910. This book includes chapters on the history, geology, geography, bird life, mammals and fishes, insects, trees and botany of Battersea Park. Within the botany section there is little more than a page devoted to the Botanical Garden of Battersea Park.[203] Whilst being somewhat disappointing in its limited contents, the chapter does confirm that the Botanical Garden contained 'about a score of parterres laid out with plants belonging to the more important Natural Orders. Many, though not

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[201] Ibid., p. 585.
[202] Ibid., p. 584.
[203] Johnson, W, *Battersea Park as a Centre for Nature Study* (T Fisher Unwin,1910), pp. 73-74.

all, of the plants are labelled, so that the unscientific visitor may soon learn to reduce his miscellaneous knowledge to a system'.[204]

Johnson's guide to Battersea Park was clearly not written as an educational guide book to the Botanical Garden, and therefore reinforces the theory that the guidebooks suggested by the LCC in 1898 were never written. In the introduction to Johnson's guide, G A Christian, then Chairman of the Battersea and Wandsworth Education Council remarked:

> Nature-Study is now so generally admitted that it requires little advocacy from me. In this delightful field, skilled guides are wanted, and, though the press has provided innumerable handbooks of a general character, it has not, so far as I know, furnished any book with a special local bearing and object. It has been urged by many who are but imperfectly acquainted with the resources of London that the lack of material is a serious drawback to the study of Nature in town.[205]

This seems strong evidence that the guidebooks on the botanical gardens suggested by the LCC were never written.

Given the lack of further references to the botany scheme for schools, including a lack of further references to it in the LCC Minutes and no apparent publication relating to the botanical beds, it is questionable whether the scheme ever took place. However, Poulsen claims that the botany beds were created and that 'these plots became the nucleus of the present flower garden, an area enclosed by a thick shrubbery in which stone crazy pavings [sic] circled and radiated between rich masses of bright blooms and foliage. Here the visitor could rest on a seat enclosed from the open space and activities of the park beyond, surrounded by the colour and fragrance of the floriculturist's art at its highest'.[206]

Although Pouslen does not make direct reference to it; it must be assumed that he is referring to the area known today as 'Old English

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[204] Ibid., p. 73.
[205] Ibid. Introduction by G A Christian, Chairman of the Battersea and Wandsworth Education Council, p.10.
[206] Poulsen, p. 106

Garden' that was opened in 1927. The Old English Garden today (Figure 41) clearly echoes Poulsen's description.

Figure 41: The Old English Garden, Victoria Park (Source: Author's Photograph). Poulsen suggests that this was created from the botany beds of the 'Botany in the Parks' Scheme.

Further research of the current site of the Old English Garden reveals that it was indeed once occupied by 'Botanical Gardens', as is illustrated in the 1916, 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Site of Botanical Garden (top right section of the plan, above the bathing lakes) as recorded on 3rd Edition 1916 Ordnance Survey Map (Source: British Library).

The 1916 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 42) does not give any definite design for the Botanical Gardens, so it is impossible to confirm whether or not these did contain the twenty classification beds mentioned in the LCC Minutes. However, it is clear from the map that these botanical gardens were situated within a triangle of paths which would have given easy access to school parties approaching from either the North, East or West of the park, and this was one of the main suggestions regarding the 'Botany in Parks' proposals in the 1898.[207]

The question of whether botanical beds were provided within the park for the education of school children is debatable, although it seems likely that they were, albeit in a limited capacity. However, it is worth briefly highlighting that the park was definitely used for another, extremely innovative educational experiment that would have utilised the natural facilities of the park for educational opportunities. Open-air schools, a new concept in education, were introduced in London in 1907, providing children who had hitherto been excluded from schools on the grounds of medical reasons with an opportunity to an education whilst at the same time treating their mild illness. The schools took their inspiration from the open-air sanatoria of Germany that treated patients with tuberculosis by combining an outdoor life with good food, regular exercise and rest. This subject will be explored fully in Chapter 4, but what is of relevance here is that as a consequence of the success of the open-air school experiments general, mainstream schools were encouraged to have at least some of their lessons outside and in order to do this many schools utilised the facilities of their local park. It is therefore not surprising that the LCC Minutes noted that at Victoria Park the LCC had, 'afforded facilities for the holding during the summer of 1917 [and 1918] of open-air classes for children'.[208] It appears that there is no other reference to the open-air classes, and without a prior knowledge of what exactly they were, it would

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[207] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1898, 17 May, p. 584.
[208] LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1917, 31 July, p. 799 and 1918, 30 July, p. 851. An oblique reference to open-air classes at Victoria Park was also made in the LCC Minutes of Proceedings 1915, 27 April, p. 583.

be extremely easy to overlook Victoria Park's participation in a major educational development.

2.11 Victoria Park Today

This chapter has explored the wide variety of resources employed at Victoria Park for the mental and physical development and education of children in the East End. These have included the facilities for bathing for the purposes of personal hygiene; swimming; sun-bathing; model yachting; the supply of drinking water and the encouragement of temperance; open-air treatment for tuberculosis at the nearby hospital; the development of physique and social skills in the adult-inspired gymnasiums and sand-gardens; knowledge of fauna through the introduction of birds and animals into the park and of flora through both the distribution of used plants and the botany scheme. However, this chapter would not be complete without offering some comment on the park as it exists today and a comparison of the facilities provided for children.

Poulsen claims 'despite the destruction caused by the Second World War and subsequent alteration and improvements, there is much remaining in the park to depict the taste and styles of the 19th century, especially in the western section. It is not only Victoria Park, but still very much a Victorian park'.[209] Whilst some warning of what to expect may be anticipated by Pevsner's observation 'the park is now much simpler than it was in the later C19',[210] a visit to the site cannot fail to disappoint the garden historian. Many of the features of the park discussed in this study have disappeared; whilst others are in a poor state of repair.

The lakes have perhaps suffered the least alteration. The ornamental lake remains as it was, and the first bathing lake (Figure 43) still exists in its original format, although it is now given over to fishing and ornamentation.

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[209] Poulsen, p. 73.
[210] Pevsner, p. 566.

Figure 43: Old Bathing lake (c. 1847-1933) today. Used for Fishing and ornamentation. (Source: Author's Photograph)

The second bathing lake, known as the 'New Bathing Lake' was, as has already been mentioned, converted into a children's play area, paddling pools and public toilets (Figure 44).

Figure 44: New Bathing lake (c. 1876-1933) converted into children's play area in 1930s. (Source: Author's Photograph)

Part of the lake was converted into a model yacht lake, and although there is no evidence of model yachts still being sailed, the lake appears to remain as it was following its conversion in the 1930s (Figure 45), and the former Victoria Park Model Yacht Club storage building remains, although this is now boarded up and offers no clue as to its previous employment.

Figure 45: Model Yacht Lake at Victoria Park (Source: Author's Photograph). Note the former Victoria Model Yacht Club storage building in the mid left-hand side of the photograph.

Of the seventy outdoor swimming pools that were in existence in London in 1950, only ten remain in use today.[211] These are clearly depicted in Figure 46, which illustrates 'the 68 full-size lidos and open air pools so far identified as being open for public use during at least part of the 20th century…The numbered locations (in black) denote facilities no longer in operation. The lettered locations (in green) denote facilities in use as of the summer of 2005'.[212] This does not include the neglected pool at Victoria Park (Indicated as Number 48 in Figure 46) which was closed in 1989, 'as to have refurbished it in compliance with new health and safety regulations would have been too costly'.[213]

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[211] The closure of many of the open air pools of Britain, including those in London and Victoria Park, have been the inspiration of Janet Smith's book, *Liquid Assets*.
[212] Smith, p. 31.
[213] Mernick, p. 43.

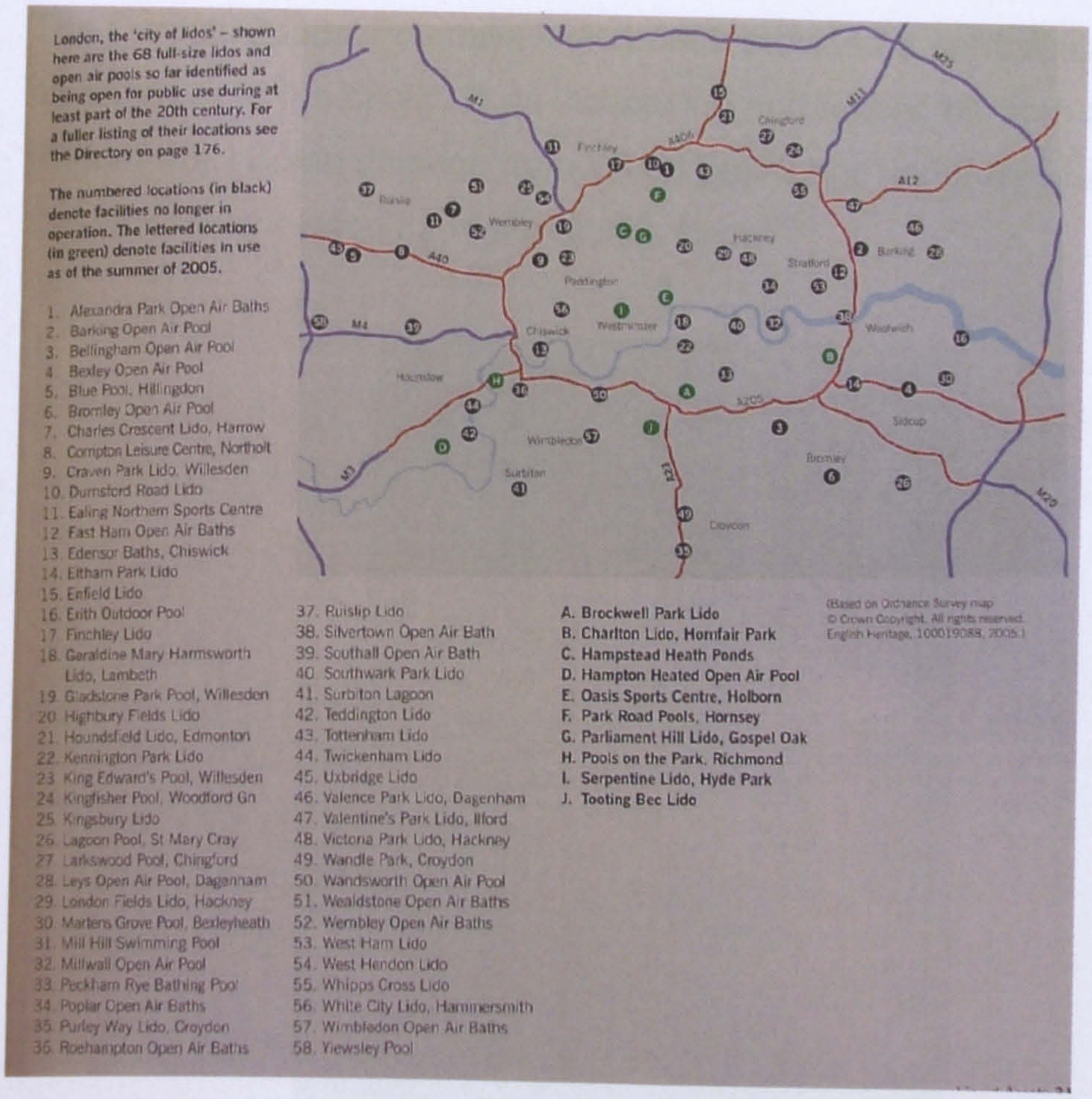

Figure 46: Illustration of 'the 68 full-size lidos and open air pools so far identified as being open for public use during at least part of the 20th century' (Source: Smith, Janet, *Liquid Assets*, p. 31).

The site of what was once 'one of the finest recreation centres in the metropolis'[214] has now been levelled, grassed over and partly turned into car park.

Figure 47: Victoria Park Open Air Swimming Pool, circa 1990, prior to its destruction (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

[214] Anon, 'Lido Opened in East End', *The Star*, 16 May 1936.

The Burdett Coutts' Fountain, which once provided a central feature and clean water to the public, is now decaying and fenced off from the public (Figure 48). Bomb damage from World War II and vandalism have taken their toll and the need for restoration is clear.[215]

Figure 48: The Burdett Coutts' Fountain today (Source: Author's Photograph)

Writing on the history of the centenary of the Temperance Movement in 1932, Hyslop concluded his work with 'A Dip into the Future. The Britain of 2032'.[216] In this he predicted that total abstinence would have been in place for over fifty years. As such, he envisaged the result would be an emphasis on the family relationship, and that

> such diseases as cancer and tuberculosis should have been stamped out. Slums should have become ugly reminiscences of the past. Infantile mortality should be reduced to the most negligible quality. The expectation of life should be so extended that centenarians will be as

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[215] This fountain and the necessity for its restoration forms part of the extensive research undertaken by Martin McNamara in his presentation for the Diploma in Building Conservation Course at the Architectural Association, entitled *The Drinking Fountains of London*, which explores in depth the history, design, location, maintenance and decline of a large number of drinking fountains in London. In his study, McNamara links the decay and decline of drinking fountains to the installation of pure water in poor working class homes and the waning of both the temperance and philanthropic movements.

[216] Hyslop, Chapter XII, p. 74.

> numerous as septuagenarians are today...Britain of 2032 will be a national member of a disarmed and warless world. With no wastage of money on armaments, no crushing burden of war debt, with no colossal annual expenditure on alcoholic drinks, and we may surely expect, with an industrial system so organized that there will be no suicidal conflicts between those engaged in production and distribution on which the prosperity of the whole nation depends, there should be a Britain happier, healthier, more contented and peaceful than the most sanguine dreamer ever dreamed.[217]

The poor state of repair of the Burdett-Coutts' Fountain today sadly reflects the reality of Hyslop's hopes for Britain and its children in the twenty-first century.

Despite threats of closure, the Victoria Park Hospital remains open, although the 'open, cast-iron balconies added to the SE corner in 1900 have been enclosed'.[218] The large gardens of the hospital, which once afforded opportunities to patients to get fresh air, have also disappeared and are now largely covered with porta-cabins and car-parks (Figure 49).

Figure 49: The City of London Hospital in 1980 illustrating how the balconies have been enclosed and the hospital gardens lost (Source: Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives)

The aviary was replaced by a modern structure in the 1950s, before totally closed and grassed over in 1989.[219] The sandpit was also in this area, and although it has not been possible to establish when it was

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[217] Ibid., pp. 76-77.
[218] Pevsner, p. 563.
[219] Mernick, p. 27.

closed, it also suffered the same fate as the aviary (Figure 50). The flowerbeds that now occupy this site exemplify the council's cost-cutting exercise of replacing the bedding displays with roses and shrubs.[220]

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Figure 50: Former site of the Aviary and Sand pit (Source: Author's Photograph). These have been replaced by grass and economically-filled flowerbeds.

Other key historical features of the park not explored in depth in this chapter have also disappeared. A pagoda that once inhabited an island on the boating lake from the mid-nineteenth Century, and a Moorish arcade shelter designed by Pennethorne at the same time, both suffered during the blitz and were subsequently demolished. The stone alcoves that have been in the park since 1860, and are reputed to have come from the old London Bridge,[221] are today daubed with graffiti.

Figure 51: Alcove in Victoria Park, reputed to have come from Old London Bridge. (Source: Author's Photograph)

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[220] Conway and Lambert, p. 15.

[221] Poulsen, p. 62; also information plaque at present site of alcoves. It has also been brought to the author's attention by Dr Clare Hickman, Bristol University, that there is a second alcove from London Bridge in the courtyard of Guy's Hospital. This forms a potentially interesting link between parks and hospital gardens and the associations of health and nature at both.

Despite the loss of so many features, Victoria Park has somehow managed to retain its character. It continues to serve one of the poorest and most built up areas of London, as 'The East End can still be described as a deprived area...There is still poverty, bad housing, unemployment'.[222] The basic principles behind the creation of Victoria Park, as with so many other municipal parks, were, 'to promote 'comfort, health and content', to offer the opportunity for family recreation, and to give access to 'fresh air and exercise'. These uses remain as valued today as ever'.[223]

Figure 52: Tower Blocks overlooking Victoria Park in 2007 (Source: Author's Photograph)

There are numerous sporting facilities in the park including tennis courts, cricket nets, a bowling green and an athletic track. Children are still catered for through both a 'One o'clock Club' for the under fives, and also primarily through the Pools Playground which lies in the centre of the park and that was created in 1985.[224] A combination of a dry playground and shallow pools, this area provides local children, many of whom live in flats with no outside space, an opportunity to get fresh and exercise (Figure 52).

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[222] Ibid., p. 117.
[223] Conway and Lambert, p. 4.
[224] GLC Leaflet on Victoria Park.

It seems entirely appropriate, having explored the history of Victoria Park, that bathing facilities for children – albeit now in the form of a paddling pool – and a children's playground should now dominate the centre of the park.

Figure 53: The Children's Play area and Pools at Victoria Park, in 2007 (Source: Author's Photograph).

3.0
GARDENS AND EDUCATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE 1865 - 1939

3.1 Children's Literature and Academic Approaches

It would not be possible to fully explore the inter-relationship between children, gardens and education during the Victorian and Edwardian periods without acknowledging and exploring the popularity of the depiction of gardens and landscapes in children's literature of this time. Surprisingly, although a large number of books for children were written and published between 1865 and 1939, they form 'a vastly intricate forest of literature which has scarcely been researched'.[225] The limited research that has been conducted on children's literature has almost exclusively been by students of literature,[226] and the subject seems to have hitherto eluded the attention of garden historians altogether, despite the fact that nature and gardens are such common themes.

Some of the limited literary studies that have been identified that focus on children's literature and gardens includes Humphrey Carpenter's *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (1985), which identifies the recurrent use of nature and garden by writers of the period, and at least one academic thesis and dissertation.[227] However, although these examples do make reference to garden imagery within children's literature, very little of it is of use to the garden historian as it is often based on intuition, circumspection and literary interpretation rather than focusing on factual evidence and a historical context. For example, when researching and analysing children's books from this period that feature gardens, literary academics have tended to focus on the garden being used as a symbolic image, the most popular being the garden as a symbol for Eden. Almost without exception, any interpretation of a

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[225] Hunt, Peter (ed), *Children's Literature: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2001), p. xiii.
[226] Several universities now offer courses in Children's Literature including Nottingham, Reading and Surrey.
[227] Edwards, Jeremy, *From One Alice to Another: A Study of the Garden in Children's Literature*, 1997 University of Surrey MA in Children's Literature and Beck, Cathy, *The Enchanted Garden*, 2003 University of Nottingham PhD.

children's text from this period that contains a garden has been interpreted by literary academics in one of three ways. Either it is argued that the author is presenting the protagonist living in Eden, as in *The Wind in the Willows* or *Winnie the Pooh,*[228] or they are celebrating the return of a child to a garden and therefore re-establishing their pre-Eden eviction as is the case in *The Secret Garden*[229] or they are mourning the eviction of the child from Eden as in *Alice in Wonderland.*[230] A sub-division of this is the theme of sexual awareness. Following this line of argument, it is suggested that the image of the garden represents either pre-pubescent sexual innocence or impending puberty sexual awareness that inevitably leads to eviction from the innocence of Eden.[231]

Whilst some academics have built up a strong defence for these interpretations based upon their readings of the text, as literary scholars are wont to do, their arguments cannot but fail to satisfy the garden historian. This chapter therefore takes the opportunity of exploring the writing and illustrations of children's literature in the Victorian and Edwardian periods through the eyes of the Garden Historian. Research has therefore focused around the actual gardens that inspired the authors and illustrators and explores to what extent these were used to substantiate the educational and physical theories for children at the time of their writing. Furthermore, by taking a chronological approach to this topic, this chapter illustrates how writers over this period increasingly used gardens with which they were familiar as an inspiration for educating their readers whilst at the same time entertaining them. The chapter begins with *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), which features a garden that was, as will be explored, probably known to its author, but that was hardly used to educate readers although it did without question entertain them. This chapter concludes with an exploration of *The Secret Garden* (1909) which, as research has proved, is an excellent example of an

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[228] Carpenter, Chapters 5 and 7.
[229] Edwards.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.

author using a garden with which they were familiar as a means of educating the reader on a number of levels.

Although *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (1906)* is the only book explored in this chapter that features a garden set in Central London, all of the writers had a connection with the Capital. Lewis Carroll and Frances Hodgson Burnett were both frequent visitors whilst JM Barrie and Beatrix Potter were residents. To substantiate and develop this, biographical information is provided on each of the authors and illustrators where relevant. For example, although Beatrix Potter was brought up in London, early links with her country-dwelling grandparents and holidays in the Lake District resulted in a rejection of the city in favour of the countryside and its traditional morals which is clearly reflected in her work. Biographical information is also used to explore any elements that may have had a pertinent effect on the books in relation to the themes explored within this thesis. An example of this is the death of Hodgson Burnett's son from tuberculosis and her obvious awareness of the treatment of this disease through fresh air, exercise and good food which is, in turn, depicted in the book.

The period explored within this chapter includes some of the greatest classics of children's literature, all of which contain extensive references to gardens, the landscape and nature. It is important to remember that the popularity of the books discussed would have ensured that they were known and accessible to children in London through libraries, Sunday School Awards and gifts. Furthermore, exposure to such books and the themes they contained would have doubtlessly influenced the physical and educational development of children in a way that was entirely different to the more 'hands on' experiences of, for example, the open-air school or charitable schemes.

3.2 Brief History of Literature for Children

In order to appreciate the social and historical context of the popularity of writing for children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is important to have a basic understanding of the history of children's literature.[232]

First published in 1865, and never out of print since, *Alice in Wonderland,* marks the turning-point in children's literature to becoming that which we recognise today in terms of content and format. Crucially, *Alice in Wonderland* also featured a garden. Whilst there is no clear evidence as to whether this garden was based on a real garden, or even whether it was intentionally used by its author to educate his readers, this book is included in this chapter as it provides an excellent starting point for exploring the ways in which literature began to use the garden as an opportunity to entertain child readers. This technique would be used increasingly by subsequent writers as an opportunity to develop and educate children. In order to fully appreciate this, it is necessary to place *Alice in Wonderland* within the context of children's literature.

Books written for children are 'a very recent phenomenon',[233] and can be traced to chapbooks that were printed from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. These were slim pamphlets (Figure 54) published in vast quantities and distributed by peddlers throughout the country.

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[232] A more detailed account of the history of Children's Literature can be found in Hunt, Peter, *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (Oxford University Press, 1995).
[233] Hunt, Peter, *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History,* p. 1.

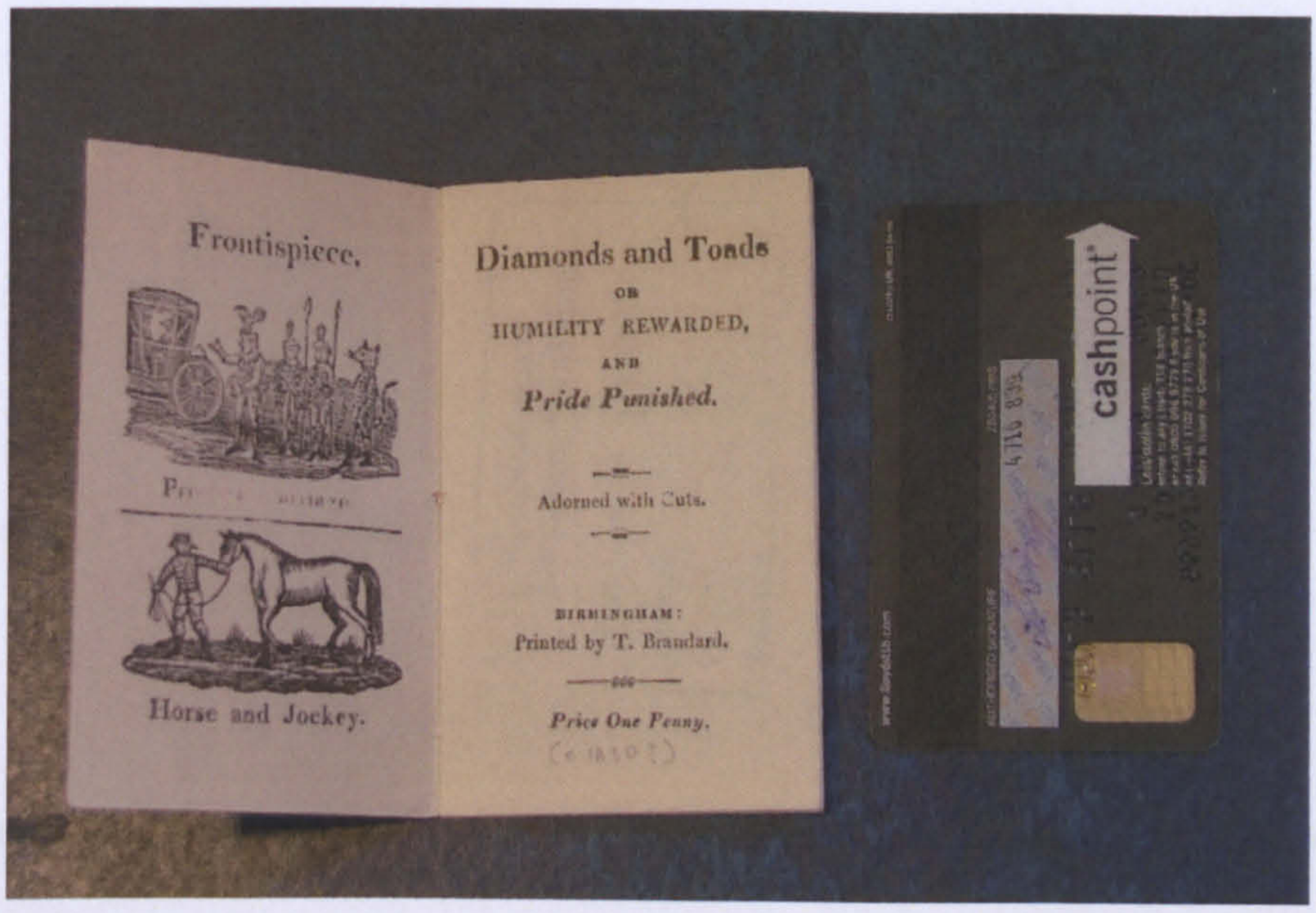

Figure 54: Facsimile Copy of Chapbook circa 1830 (Source: Roehampton University), an example of the earliest books for children.

With roots in traditional folk tales, ballads and riddles and an approach 'similar to comic strips now',[234] chapbooks brought popular literature to the semi-literate masses - both adults and children alike. The literacy rate amongst the working class had increased and this was mainly due to the Sunday School movement from the late eighteenth century. Sunday School teachers saw the potential of utilising the chapbook format to create small, cheap, accessible books to aid their teaching. As the Sunday School movement developed, prizes were given as incentives for attendance or good work, and publishers were quick to identify a further market for cheaply produced books of didactic moral tales that were suitable prizes. An example of such a prize can be found in the Bratton Collection at Roehampton University. This edition of *The Basket of Flowers* [undated] is inscribed as being, 'Presented to Louisa Bird' by the Vicar of the Holy Trinity Church Sunday School in West Bromwich (Figures 55 and 56).[235]

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[234] Whalley, J I and Chester, T R, *A History of Children's Book Illustration* (John Murray with The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1988), p. 93.
[235] This edition may be found in the Roehampton University Collection.

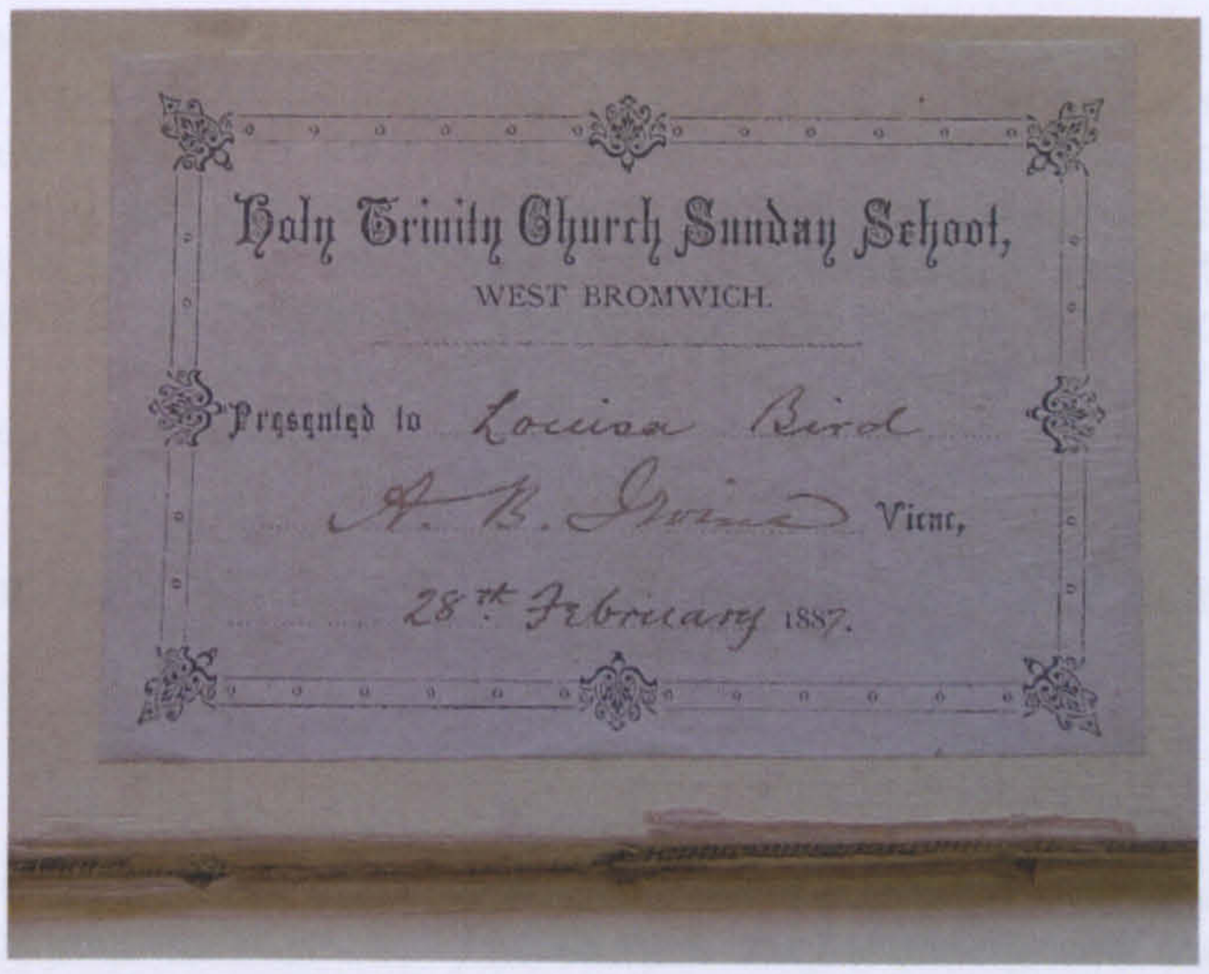

Figure 55: Inscription in *The Basket of Flowers and Other Tales* (undated) (Source: Roehampton University)

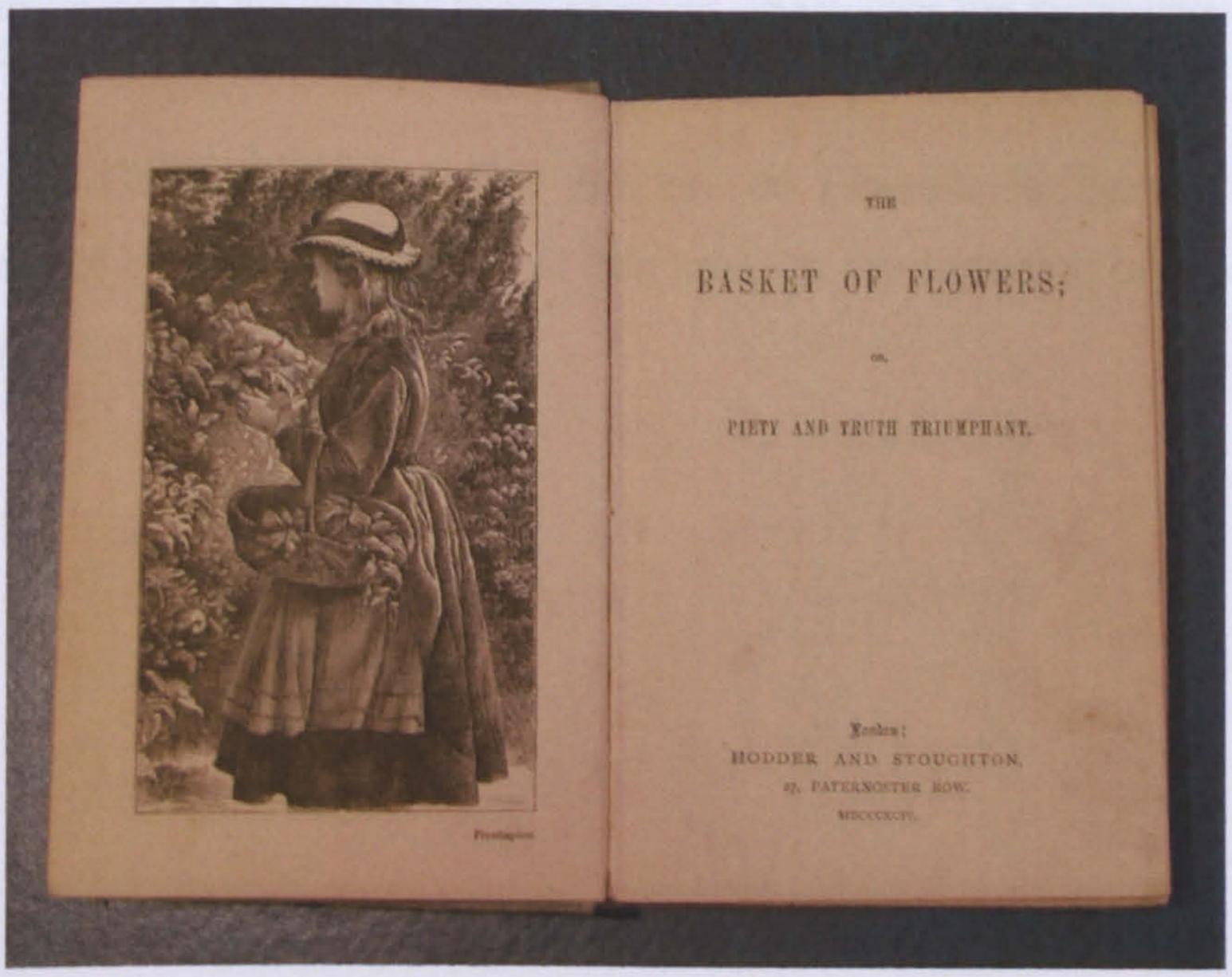

Figure 56: Frontispiece to *The Basket of Flowers* (Source: Roehampton University)

Typical of the didactic books of the day, *The Basket of Flowers* tells the story of how a father, using his garden as an example and inspiration, provides his daughter, Mary, with an endless stream of didacticism with constant references to the Bible:

> One day James was transplanting young plants into a bed prepared for them, whilst Mary, a little farther on, was preparing for him by clearing the ground from weeds.

> "This double work," said James, "is an emblem of that which ought to be the daily work of our lives; striving to uproot from our minds the evil habits which are natural to them, and to replace the graces which are not natural. And as now our work would not prosper unless God sent the gracious influences of the sun and rain, and the dew, to make the young plants flourish; so neither can heavenly graces flourish in the soul unless watered by the dew of God's grace, and cherished by the gracious influences of his spirit".[236]

An introduction to a nineteenth-century edition of *The Basket of Flowers* states that it is

> A very interesting little work for the libraries of Sunday Schools, and every variety of youthful readers. The story is very touching, and the lessons taught are most useful and important. I have never read lessons of practical piety drawn with more simplicity, than they are in this little book, from the beauties of nature. Indeed, in almost every chapter we find, addressed to the youthful heart, sermons, whose texts are the flowers of the gardens.[237]

Initially of German origin, *The Basket of Flowers* is typical of the emphasis of children's literature at this time on the teaching of moral and religious lessons.

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[236] Schmid, J C von, *The Basket of Flowers* (Nelson and Sons, 1872), pp. 74-75.
[237] Schmid, J C von, *The Basket of Flowers and Other Tales* (Blackie & Son, undated c. 1870), Introduction by 'GTB', p. v.

3.3 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland:* The Inspiration and Creation

Despite the vast majority of children's literature being highly didactic in content, a few authors were introducing material that was created for the sheer entertainment of children and purposefully rebelling against the moral emphasis. Examples include Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense Verse* (1846) and *The English Struwwelpeter [Shockheaded Peter]* (English translation, 1848). Books such as these paved the way for the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice,* although, 'Nothing – not the jaunty narration of Thackery in *The Rose and the Ring,* nor the surreal verse of Edward Lear – prepares us for the shock of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the most brilliant and original children's book of the century and perhaps of all time'.[238]

Figure 57: Charles Dodgson by O G Rejlander, 1863 (Source: Lovett Stoffel, Stephanie, *Lewis Carroll and Alice,* p. 12)

[238] Hunt, p. 140.

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898), whose real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, was a mathematics tutor at Oxford (Figure 57). He had a wide range of interests including photography, story-telling and, as has been much speculated, young girls.[239] One of his favourite young girls to photograph and spend time with was Alice Liddell (Figure 58), the daughter of the Dean of Carroll's college, Christchurch. It was whilst trying to photograph Christ Church Cathedral from the garden of the Dean's residence that Carroll met and befriended the Dean's three daughters and subsequently began playing with them in the Deanery gardens,[240] and taking them on picnics, boating excursions,[241] walks in the local meadows[242] and visits to the University Museum and the Oxford Botanic Gardens.[243]

Figure 58: Photograph of Alice Liddell as a beggar-child by Charles Dodgson circa late 1850s (Source: Lovett Stoffel, Stephanie, *Lewis Carroll and Alice.* Original at Princeton University Library)

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[239] Examples of references to Carroll's speculated paedophilia may be found in Coats, Karen, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands* (University of Iowa Press, 2004) and Zornado, J, *Inventing the Child: Culture, Ideology, and the Story of Childhood* (Garland, 2001)

[240] Wakeling, Edward, *Lewis Carroll's Diaries,* 26 May, 1862 (The Lewis Carroll Society, 1997), p. 69.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid., 13 March 1863.

[243] Ibid., 25 May 1863, p. 200.

It was during one of their boating trips in July 1862 that Carroll, 'told the children the fairy-tale of 'Alice's Adventures Underground', for which I undertook to write out for Alice'.[244] Although the written, illustrated transcription of the story was originally only intended for Alice, Carroll showed the story to his friend the novelist George McDonald, who persuaded Carroll to publish it. Carroll extended and revised the text and approached the well-known London artist John Tenniel (1820-1914) to provide the illustrations.

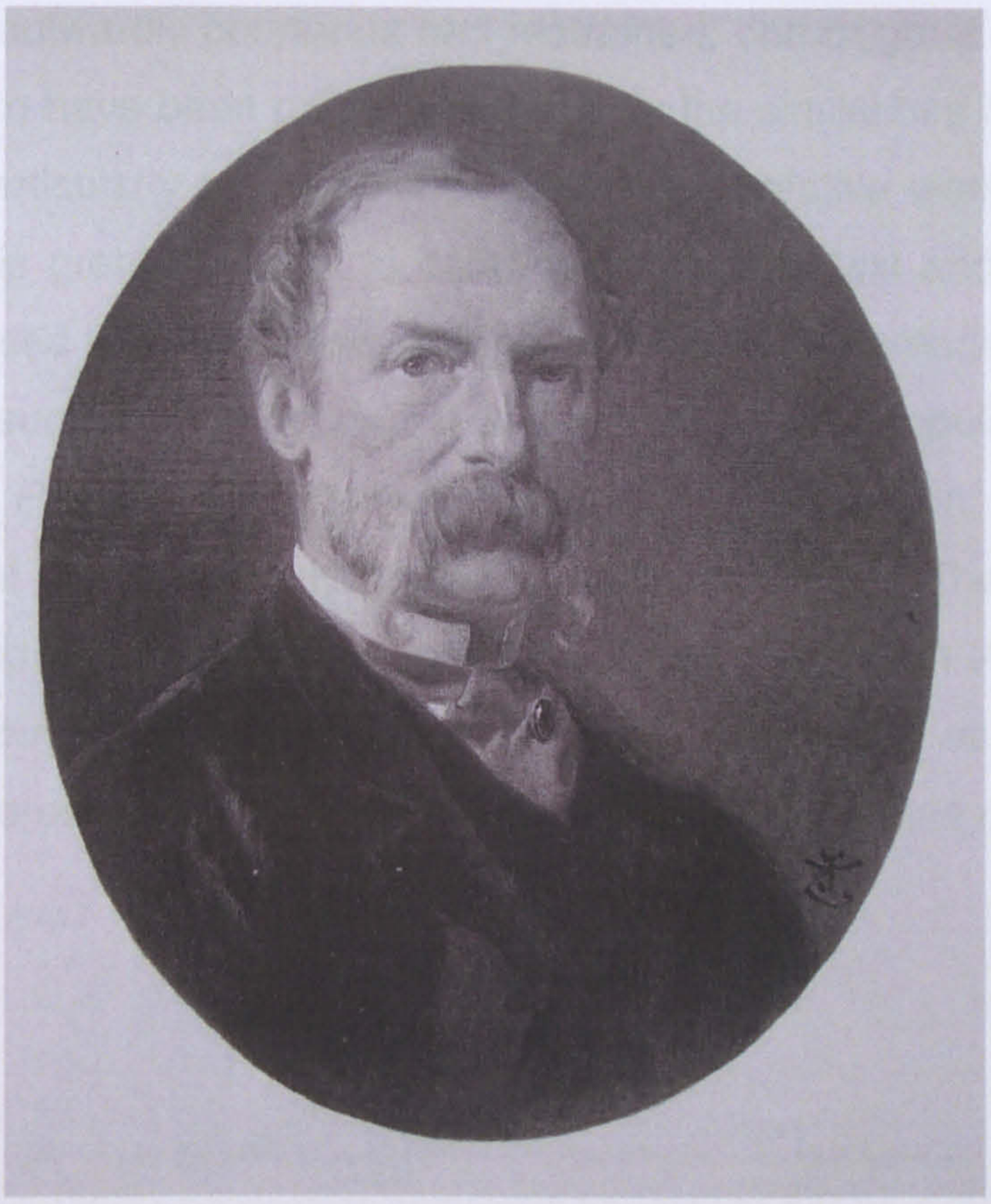

Figure 59: Sir John Tenniel – oil self-portrait, 1882 (Source: Aberdeen Art Gallery, Reproduced in Engen, Rodney, *Sir John Tenniel*, frontispiece)

At first glance Carroll's choice of Tenniel (Figure 59) as illustrator may seem an unusual choice. Tenniel had never illustrated a children's book, and even after providing the drawings for the two *Alice* books, these remained his sole contribution to children's illustration. The main body of

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[244] Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (T Fisher Unwin, 1898), p. 85.

Tenniel's work was the 2,000 full-page satirical, political cartoons he produced during his fifty years working for the magazine, *Punch*, a paper with a 'clever blend of political commentary and domestic humour'[245] of which Carroll was an avid reader.[246] It seems highly likely that Carroll was drawn to Tenniel because, 'Tenniel really was the only artist who shared implicitly Dodgson's fifties style historicist/satirical view'.[247]

Tenniel produced forty-two illustrations for *Alice,* and, somewhat reluctantly, was also persuaded to provide fifty illustrations for the sequel *Through the Looking Glass.* The relationship between Tenniel and Carroll was, whilst outwardly courteous and restrained, one of great tension and this seems to have been primarily caused by the similarities between the two men, particularly a 'scrupulousness in their creative work'.[248] It was however, this great attention to detail given to both text and illustration, that contributed to the success of *Alice. Alice* was an immediate financial and literary success and by 1898 it was voted the most popular children's book by the *Pall Mall Gazette,* which said of its poll position: 'The verdict is so natural that it will surprise no normal person'.[249] The amount of research and literary criticism relating to Carroll and both *Alice* and its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) is staggering, as 'public and scholarly interest in Lewis Carroll has grown at a remarkable rate'.[250]

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[245] Morris, Frankie, *Artist of Wonderland* (Lutterworth Press, 2005), p. 2.
[246] Engen, Rodney, *Sir John Tenniel* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 69.
[247] Simpson, Roger, *Sir John Tenniel: Aspects of his Work* (Associated University Press, 1994), p. 141. Simpson further explores the relationship between Carroll, Satire and Tenniel in Chapters 5 and 6 of his book.
[248] Morris, p. 140.
[249] Collingwood, p. 93.
[250] Gardner, Martin, *The Annotated Alice* (Penguin, 2001), p. xxv.

Alice in Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass*: The Gardens

Both *Alice* books feature gardens: The Queen of Hearts' Garden in *Alice* and The Garden of Live Flowers in *Through the Looking Glass*. From the beginning of *Alice,* Alice is eager to enter the garden she so tantalisingly glimpses through a door at the bottom of the rabbit hole:

> Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway.[251]

Literary scholars have interpreted Alice's desire to enter this garden in many ways. Particularly popular interpretations are that the garden is representative of Eden to which Alice is trying to get to through the nonsense of life,[252] that Alice's entry into the garden is indicative of her 'first step towards puberty',[253] or conversely that the garden represents the secret world of childhood that can only be entered by those who are small.[254] The symbolic connotations of the garden have clearly captured the imagination of literary scholars. However, as far as can be ascertained, no detailed research has been carried out to establish whether there were links between the gardens Alice Liddell and Carroll knew and those featured in the *Alice* books which may give a far more plausible, if somewhat less controversial, explanation for their inclusion in the books. The lack of research is all the more surprising given the extent to which Carroll clearly used the surroundings he and Alice Liddell shared to personalise his stories for Alice.[255] There have been some vague, passing references to the gardens personally known to both Alice Liddell and Carroll. In his 2006 article, Stephen Martin briefly acknowledges that the Cathedral garden at Christ Church College was closed off by what became a 'magic door' for Alice as she was allowed to

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[251] Carroll, Lewis, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* p. 21. (Wordsworth Classics, 1993 Edition [first published 1865]*).*
[252] Edwards.
[253] Ibid., p. 8.
[254] Hunt, p. 1.
[255] Gardner, p. xiii.

look but was never allowed through it.[256] However, It is only upon visiting the site that it is possible to begin to piece together the way in which the gardens shared by Alice and Carroll may have been incorporated into the text and whether there was any educational intent by the author behind them.

As well as being a mathematics lecturer Carroll was also a sub-librarian in Christ Church Library. His office, based on the upper floor, directly overlooked the garden of the Deanery, the home of the Dean of Christ Church and his children including Alice. Beyond the Deanery garden, divided by a garden wall, was the garden of Christ Church Cathedral (Figure 60). Looking at the view from his office Carroll (Figure 60), it is evident that Carroll was well placed to watch the children at play.

Figure 60: View from Carroll's Library Window overlooking the Deanery (far right) and garden (foreground). (Source: Author's Photograph) Note the wall at the end of the garden dividing the Deanery garden from the Cathedral garden. There is a green wooden door left of centre in the wall.

Dividing the Deanery garden from the Cathedral garden beyond was a stone wall, within which was set a wooden door. It would obviously have

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[256] Martin, Stephen, 'Dons and Dragons', *The Lewis Carroll Review,* Issue 34, July 2006, pp. 4-6.

been deemed inappropriate for children to play within the Cathedral gardens, but it is quite feasible that Alice could catch a tantalising glimpse of the Cathedral garden by peeping through the keyhole of the green door that divided the Deanery garden from the Cathedral garden (Figures 60 and 61).

Figure 61: The Cathedral Garden, with the Deanery to the far left and Christ Church Library to the far right. The entrance into the Deanery Garden is on the right hand side at the top of the stairs. (Source: Author's Photograph)

Although heavily illustrated, *Alice in Wonderland* contains only one detailed illustration of the Queen of Hearts' Garden (Figure 62).

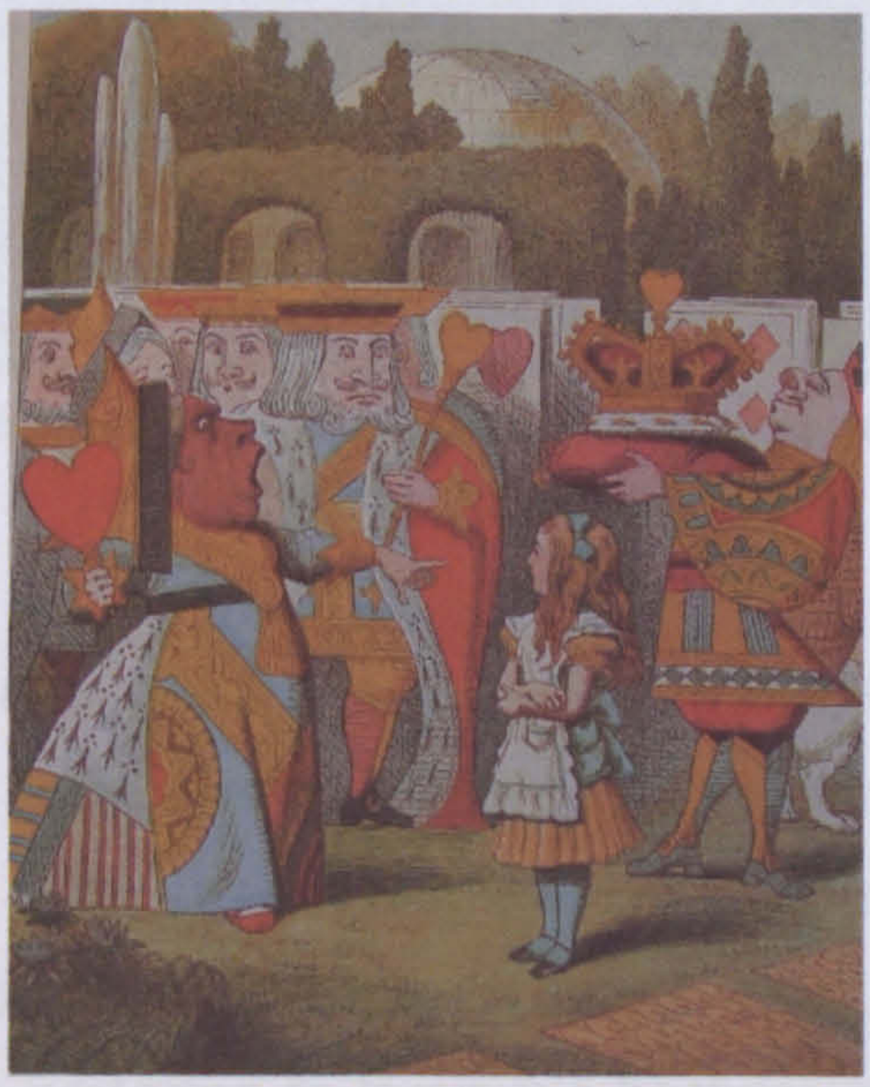

Figure 62: Alice in the Queen of Hearts Garden. Drawing by John Tenniel. (Source: *The Nursery Alice*, p. 44.)

It is disappointing to note that Tenniel's illustration does not appear to reflect either the Deanery or Cathedral gardens. Mavis Batey[257] claims that the garden illustrated by Tenniel depicts the Oxford Botanic Garden water lily house in the background, which Carroll visited with Alice. Certainly we know from Carroll's diary that he visited the Botanic Garden with Alice and that these gardens were enjoying a renaissance thanks to the energetic enthusiasm of the new professor responsible for the gardens, Charles Giles Daubeny. Daubeny had indeed overseen the creation of new glasshouses in 1851,[258] but unfortunately further research proves that these were not domed as that depicted by Tenniel, but rather angular in design.

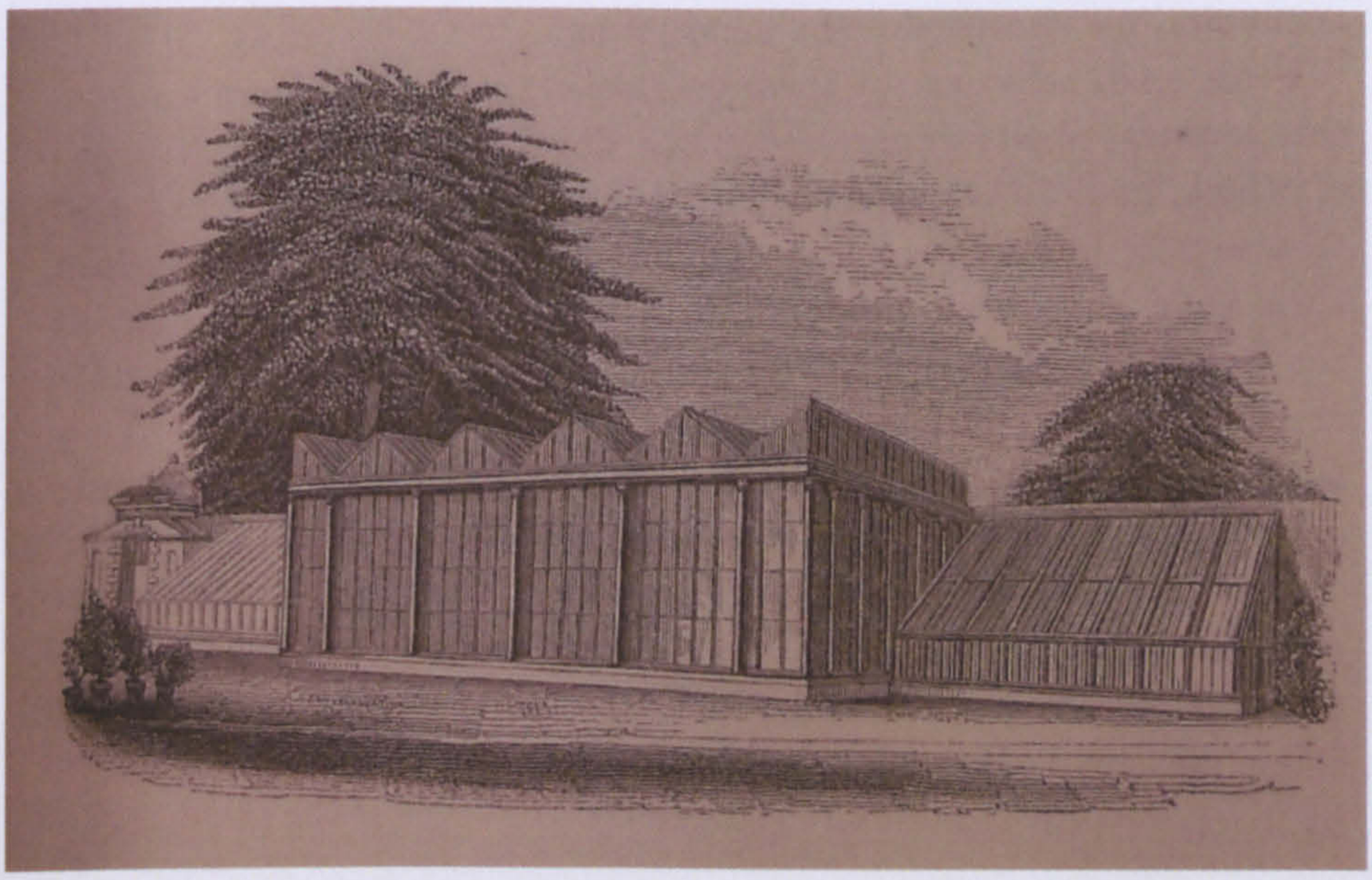

Figure 63: The Stove Houses at Oxford Botanic Garden, circa 1853 (Source: Daubeny, Charles, *Oxford Botanic Garden)*

If the garden featured in *Alice* is based on those of the Deanery and Cathedral gardens, it is disappointing that this is not reflected in the artwork of Tenniel. However, there are at least two explanations for this. Whilst a highly accomplished artist, 'Tenniel would never be a strong landscape artist; he preferred to leave his backgrounds to the discretion

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[257] Batey, Mavis, *The World of Alice* (Jarold Publishing, 2004), p. 14.
[258] Allen, L & Walker, T, *The University of Oxford Botanic Garden* (University of Oxford Botanic Guides, 1995), p. 63.

of his engravers'.[259] Tenniel also preferred to work from his imagination rather then from models or life, an obvious example of which is the clear difference between the real Alice Liddell and Tenniel's fictional Alice. It seems likely, therefore, that either the background was provided by an engraver or it was simply the product of Tenniel's imagination with no reference at all the gardens of Oxford.

[259] Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, p. 75.

Alice: The Moral and Educational Lessons

It is questionable as to whether the gardens in *Alice* offer any moral or educational lessons for the young reader. *Alice* has traditionally found its place in literary history as marking the shift in books for children that were solely didactic in content to those that were seemingly pure entertainment. However, it seems somewhat at odds that the author who is credited with this transition should be the son of a minister and an academic lecturer and yet could produce two major pieces of literary work that contained nothing at all that was educational. Certainly both *Alice,* and in particular, *Looking-Glass* contain many oblique references to complex mathematical concepts and language, so much so that Martin Gardener's text, *The Annotated Alice*, is solely dedicated to their explanation.[260] The complexity of these concepts does, however, suggest that they were more likely incorporated for the amusement of the author than the education of the young reader. A commentator on *Alice* observed

> it seems a pointless take to attempt any longer to speculate about the "meaning" of the *Alice* books. Such endeavours, whether resorting to mathematical, linguistic, Freudian, Jungian, or even psychedelic interpretations, invariably say far more about the commentators and their times than they do about their source.[261]

Whether there are any moral lessons to be learned is also rather tenuous. The only moral character in the books appears to be Alice herself, who manages to remain in the main calm in a world of eccentricity and extreme emotion, and nowhere is this eccentricity and extreme emotion more clearly expressed than by the Queen in her garden. It has been suggested that *Alice* is a parable of the advantages of the Froebelian approach to education and allowing nature rather than adults to educate children.[262] The Queen's Garden represents the harnessing of nature – which is essentially what a garden is – to such extreme order and artificiality that even the roses are painted, and this garden is actually far

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[260] Gardner.
[261] Simpson, Roger, *Sir John Tenniel: Aspects of his Work* (Associated University Presses, 1994), p. 143.
[262] Edwards, p. 10.

more threatening and destructive to a child than the adult-free wild woods outside. There is certainly a case to be argued that 'Carroll, fascinated with children as he was, may have found it difficult to ignore the claims apparent in Froebel's philosophy: that traditional methods of education employed by adults corrupted children'.[263] It would therefore be possible to conclude that whilst *Alice* does not explicitly set out to develop children educationally or physically though garden imagery, it does, perhaps, acknowledge the potential of the garden in the general education children.

[263] Ibid., p. 20.

3.4 J M Barrie and *Peter Pan*

There can be little doubt that Carroll's talent for creating both a fantasy world for children and focusing on entertainment rather than didacticism has been more closely matched by J M Barrie (1860-1937) than any other author. Like 'Wonderland', the 'Never Never Land' of *Peter Pan* had as its inspiration gardens that were familiar to Barrie and the children for whom the story was told; in this instance Kensington Gardens, although this is not necessarily evident in what we today know as the story of *Peter Pan*. It is Barrie's use of such a familiar location to so many children – and particularly London-based children – that marks this book as a transitional point in the development of writers creating books for children that used gardens they knew to educate children.

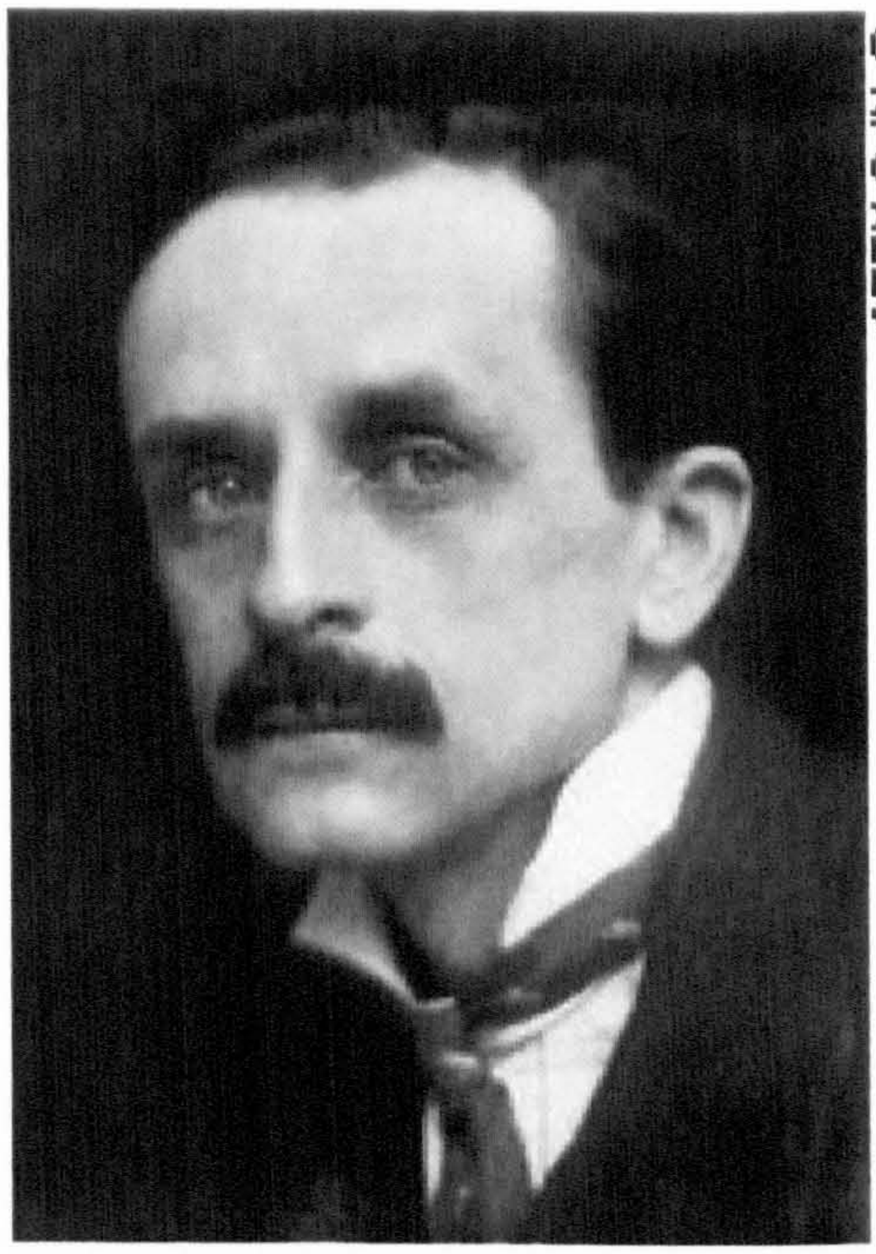

Figure 64: J M Barrie by George Charles Beresford, 1902 (Source: National Portrait Gallery)

Peter Pan was developed from an earlier novel, *The Little White Bird* (1902), which was originally written primarily for adult readers and is largely biographical. It centres around a seemingly bad-tempered old bachelor who was clearly closely modelled on Barrie himself (Figure 64). The bachelor cannot resist helping people through kindness, but resents any acknowledgment of his thoughtfulness which runs contrary to the

detached, uncaring persona he prefers to adopt. Through a series of events, the bachelor surprisingly befriends a small child, David, to whom he recounts the tale of a baby named Peter Pan. The bachelor tells David that all children were once birds in Kensington Gardens, but they lose their bird-like looks and ability to fly when they are given to their parents and become children. Peter Pan can never quite do this and becomes half boy, half bird and remains in Kensington Gardens. This story forms a section of *The Little White Bird* and was later published independently as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* in 1906, when it was lavishly illustrated with the fifty beautiful, dreamlike illustrations by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), one of England's most prolific and successful illustrators of the late nineteenth century. It was clearly now aimed at an audience of children.

Peter Pan and Kensington Gardens

The inspiration for *The Little White Bird* and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* came directly from a chance meeting between Barrie and the young sons of the Davies family, all of whom lived in London, close to Kensington Gardens. Childless and yet with a natural appeal to children, Barrie soon became firm friends with the Davies boys, creating stories to entertain them. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* is set almost exclusively within the gardens that were so familiar to the boys. It is therefore not surprising that the frontispiece features a map of the gardens themselves (Figure 65).

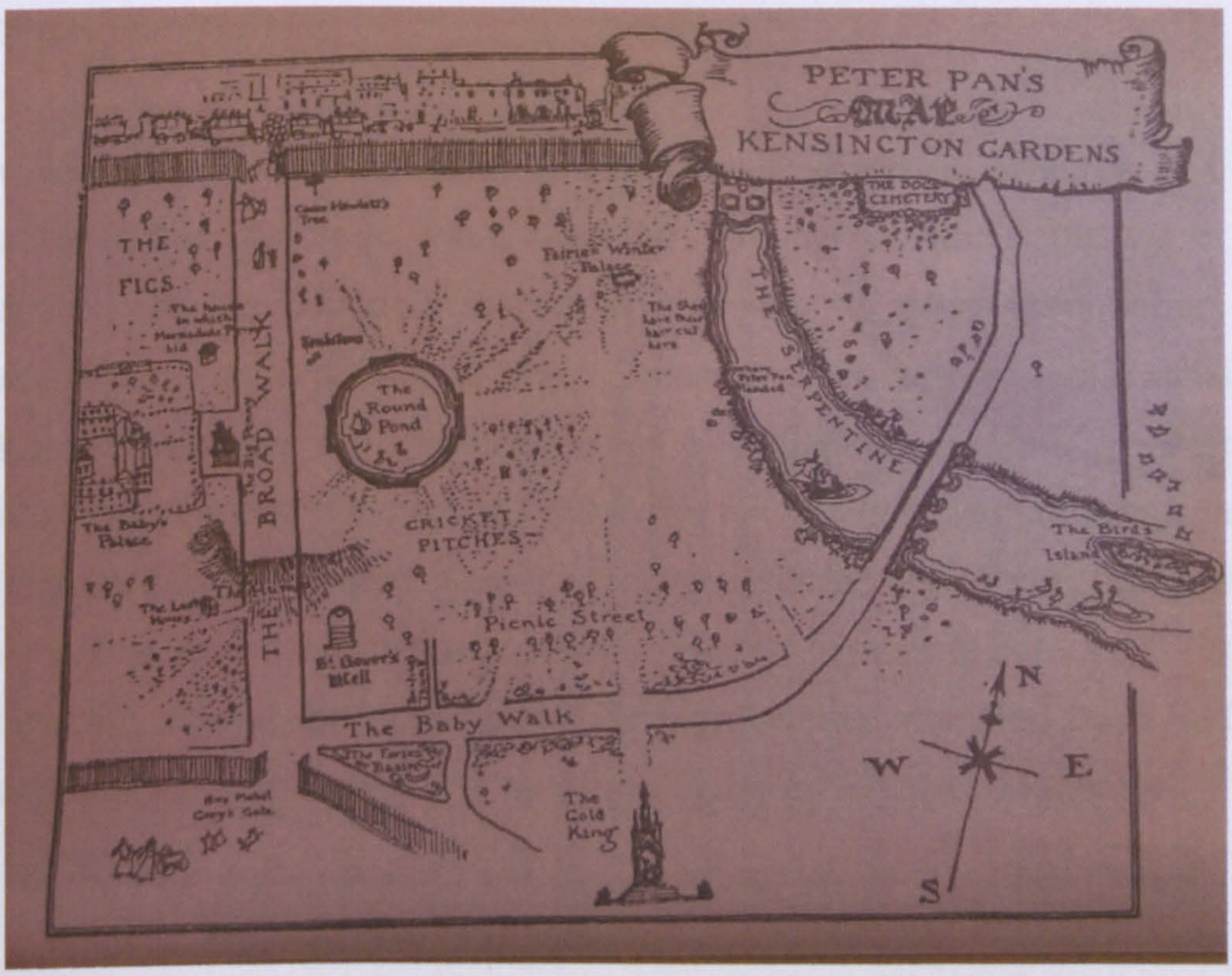

Figure 65: Map of Kensington Gardens from Frontispiece of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

It is clear from this map and a walk around the site that both the map and text accurately reflect the gardens themselves. The first chapter of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* is titled, 'The Grand Tour of the Gardens', and this, together with the frontispiece map, provides an introduction to the gardens, for, as Barrie states: 'You must see for yourselves that it will

be difficult to follow Peter Pan's adventures unless you are familiar with the Kensington Garden'.[264] In the visual and literary tour of the gardens, Kensington Palace is renamed, 'The Baby's Palace', after Queen Victoria who was born at the Palace in 1819. The large statue of Queen Victoria on the Broad Walk is nick-named 'the Big Penny', no doubt a reference to the fact that most children would have been most familiar with Queen Victoria's image from the impression of her on a penny and would naturally have associated the penny with the statue. Not only are major features of the garden made reference to, but so too are some of the smaller details of the park that could so easily have been overlooked by a lesser author. Such detailed observation no doubt delighted the Davies children as much as it would the subsequent child readers of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens.*

An example of Barrie's ability to take small, incidental features of the gardens and transform them into the fantasy for which his work is admired are the boundary stones which mark the parish boundaries in Kensington Gardens (Figure 66). These are marked with the initials, 'W.S.M.', which is an abbreviation for 'Westminster St Mary's'. Barrie transforms the boundary stones within the text of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* into two tombstones marking the site where, 'Peter found the two babes, who had fallen unnoticed from their perambulators'.[265] The boundary marker for Westminster St Marylebone, indicated by 'W.S.M' becomes within the text the gravestone of Walter Stephen Matthews.

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[264] Barrie, JM, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (Oxford University Press, 1991 [originally published 1906]), p. 4.
[265] Ibid., p. 65.

Figure 66: Boundary Markers for Parish of Paddington (left) and Westminster St Mary's (right) (Source: Author's photograph). Barrie reinvents these within his text into gravestones.

Despite being a relatively thin volume, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* contained fifty colour prints by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), and one of these depicts the boundary markers/tombstones.

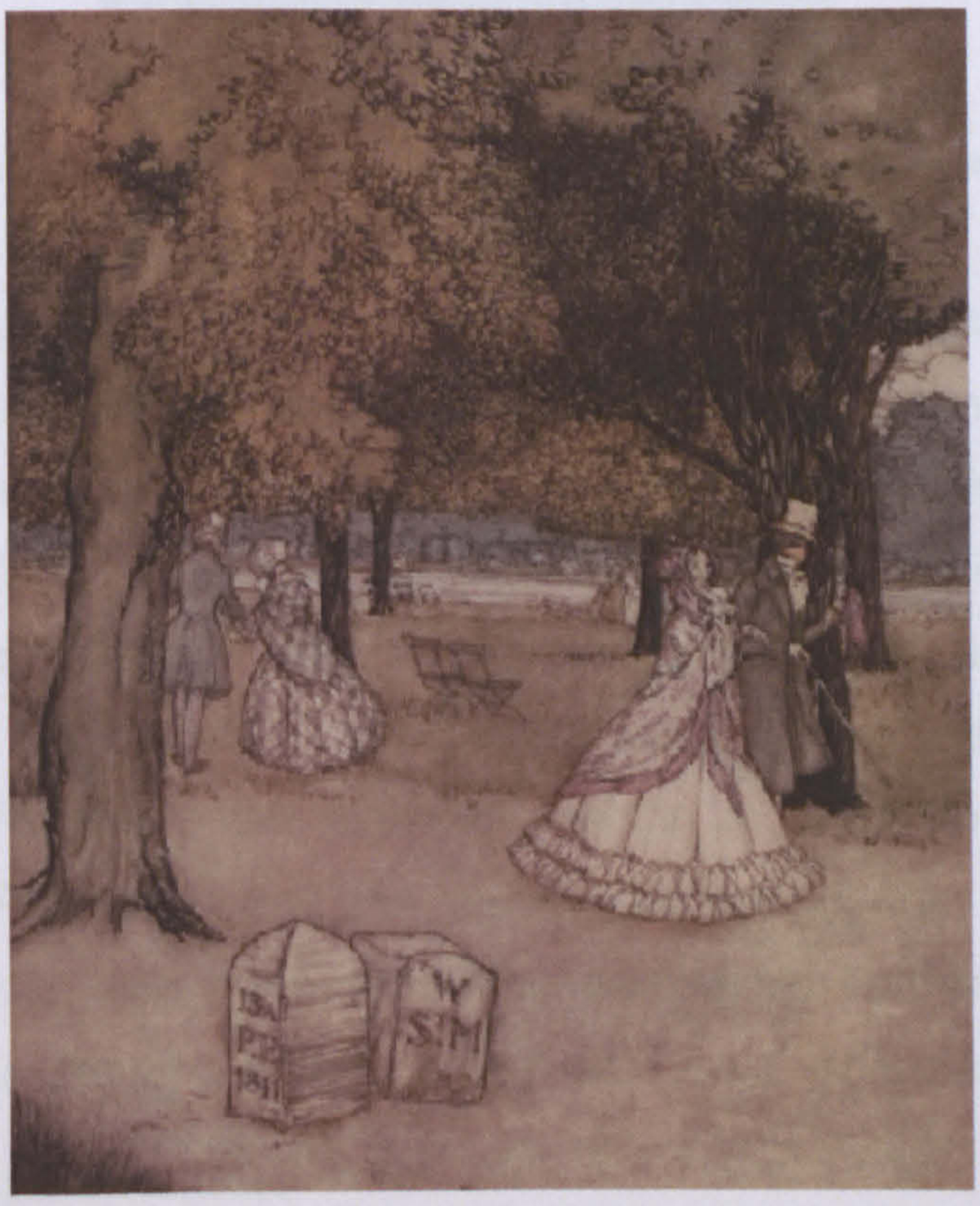

Figure 67: Tombstones of Walter Stephen Matthews and Phoebe Phelps illustrated by Arthur Rackham for *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906)

It is very evident when comparing the photograph of the boundary markers with Rackham's illustration that Rackham visited the gardens and used them as the basis for his illustrations. Further evidence of this is given by Walter Starkie, Rackham's wife's nephew, who recalls accompanying the artist to Kensington Gardens whilst he was working on the illustrations.[266]

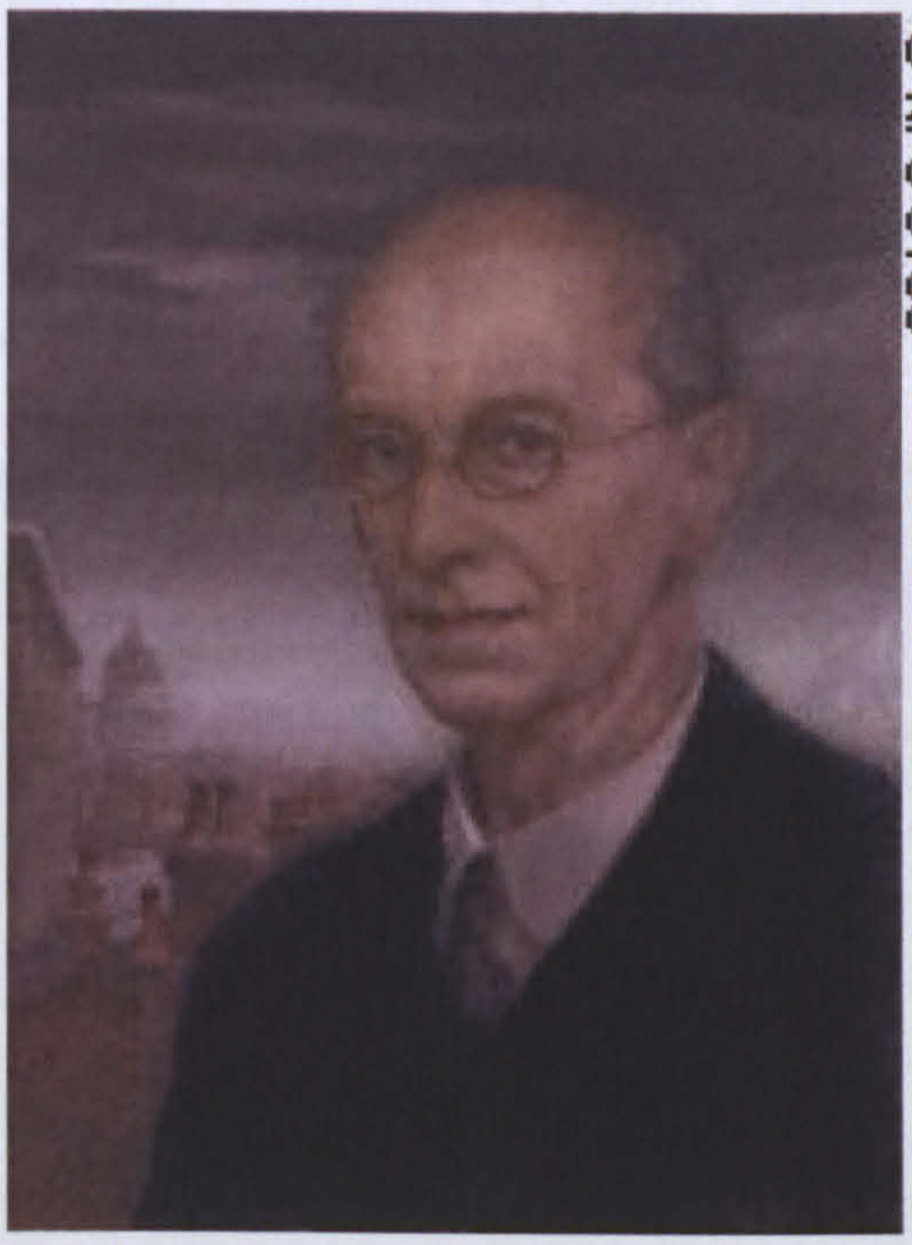

Figure 68: Arthur Rackham by Arthur Rackham, 1934 (Source: National Portrait Gallery)

Rackham (Figure 68) was one of the period's most successful and well-known artists. With a studio based in London's Primrose Hill, he illustrated more than 150 books,[267] constantly developing his unique style that almost always combined the grotesque and beautiful in each of his delicate, water-colour illustrations. New advances in colour printing ensured that his distinctive, precise illustrations could be faithfully re-produced. Rackham had eighteen months in which to produce his images for *Peter Pan* and the result was one of the most lavishly illustrated books ever published. The partnership between Barrie and Rackham was perhaps so successful because they were both able to

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[266] Hamilton, James, *Arthur Rackham: A Life with* Illustration (Pavilion, 1990), p. 72.
[267] A full list of books illustrated by Rackham can be found in Engen's *Arthur Rackham,* pp. 135-139.

take a location familiar to many children, and transform it beyond the everyday into the realms of fantasy; Barrie through words and Rackham through art. The successful combination of Rackham, Barrie and their imaginations was noted by James Hamilton in his biography of Rackham:

> *Peter Pan* is an imaginative distillation of a place that Rackham – and countless others – knew intimately. The Broadwalk, St Govor's Well, the Round Pond and the Serpentine were all parts of the Gardens against which a localized myth of the kind that Barrie invented could be played out. It was also the ideal background to set Rackham's own imagination alight. Such is the importance of reality to him as a spur for his imagination, that Rackham's gnomes and fairies, almost outnumbered by boys, girls and grown-ups, live among real railings, dance on newly spun cobwebs, and flit about the Serpentine at dusk as the gas lights come on in the background.[268]

Figure 69: Fairies flying over the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens at Dusk, illustrated by Arthur Rackham for *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906)

Like so many of the authors and illustrators of this period, Rackham 'was above all inspired by the past. In his work and his life he proved a true reactionary, one who hated anything new, especially machines and

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[268] Hamilton, p. 77.

modern conveniences'.[269] It was almost inevitable that Rackham should find solace in nature, which was 'his first love'.[270] Consequently the exterior backgrounds to Rackham's illustrations are probably more famous and well-recognised than the characters he placed within them (Figure 70). Trees particularly inspired Rackham, becoming, 'the most characteristic elements in Rackham's style; the sinewy and grotesque characters he invented from twisted branches became and remain today a byword for his particular brand of fantasy'.[271]

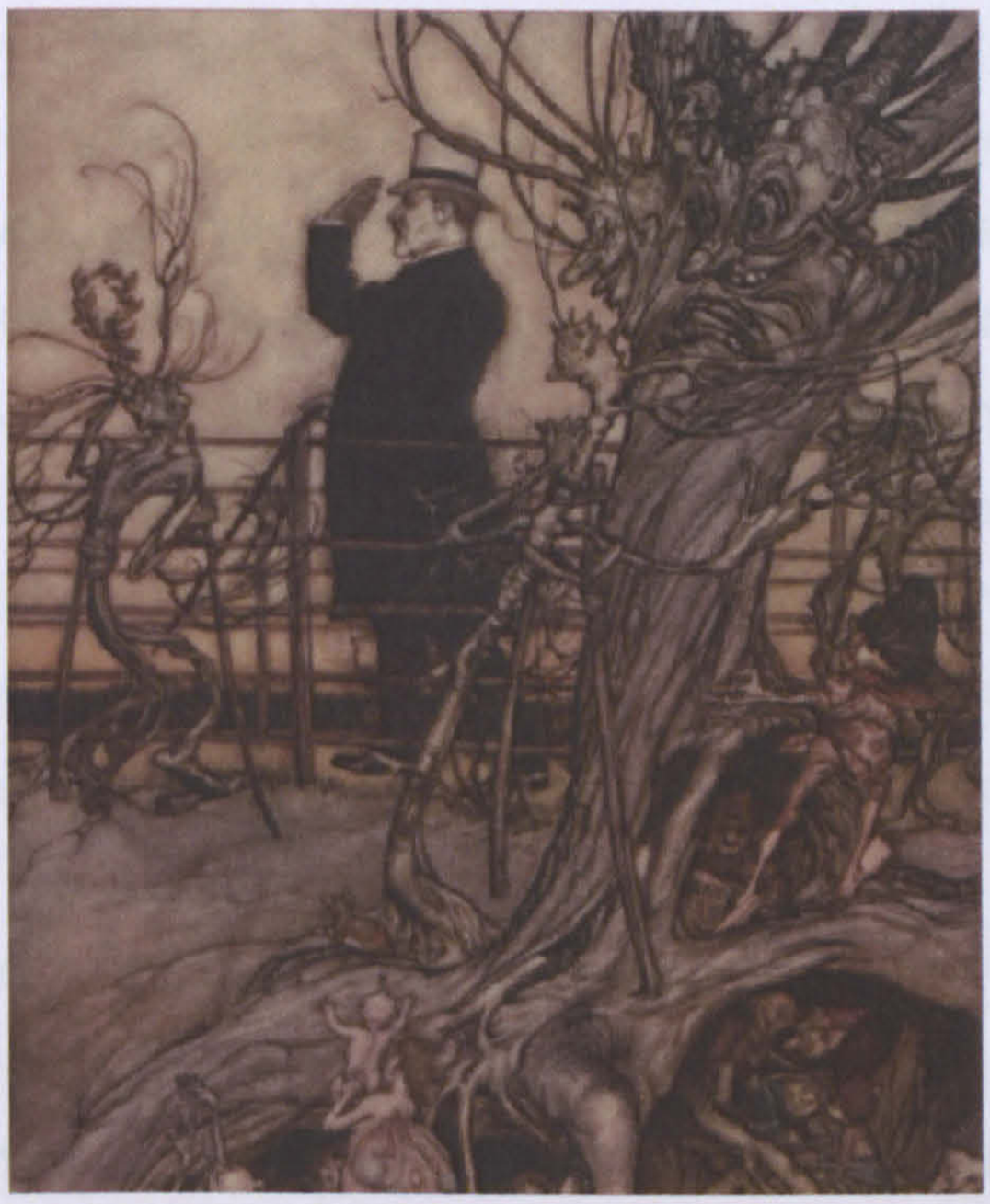

Figure 70: The King in Kensington Gardens illustrated by Arthur Rackham for *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906). Although the King is credited as the main subject of the image, he is eclipsed by Rackham's depiction of nature.

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[269] Engen, Rodney, *Arthur Rackham*, p. 12.
[270] Ibid., p. 20.
[271] Ibid., p. 21.

Peter Pan and Education

Both *Peter Pan* and *Alice* captured the imaginations of children. *Alice* featured a new, fantasy world, whilst *Peter Pan* took the everyday, familiar environment of many children and, through word and art, transformed it into a mythical world. However, like *Alice,* it is questionable as to what extent *Peter Pan* contains a clear educative message for the child reader.

Although charming, it could be argued that the book carries a sinister message, closely linked to Barrie's life. *Peter Pan* stays half boy, half bird and although he has adventures with the wildlife and fairies in Kensington Gardens, he is never loved by a family and never grows up. Barrie himself was a small man (only 5ft 3in) with exceptionally youthful looks, a marriage that was a sham, and, it has been suggested, as sexless an existence as that of Peter Pan.[272] *Peter Pan*, whilst in some ways celebrating immaturity, and the fun to be had in staying in the garden, 'is an awful warning to those who choose to remain immature'.[273]

It would therefore seem that *Peter Pan* does develop the work of *Alice* by using a garden known to children as a setting for a moral lesson; even though it may have been on a very subtle level. However, the text of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens,* together with Rackham's illustrations, does succeed in recording the Edwardian tradition of taking children outside to a park to benefit from fresh air and exercise for their physical benefit, which started with young babies in prams being wheeled by their nannies. Although Barrie appears to simply have recorded this as part of the story-telling, this text, together with Rackham's illustrations have, almost certainly unintentionally, captured a slice of the Edwardian London child's daily routine that reflected concerns for the physical development of children. It is surely no coincidence that Open-Air Schools, as will be explored in Chapter 4, were established only a year later and that the

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[272] Carpenter, p. 177.
[273] Ibid., p. 179.

open-air classes in mainstream education that these inspired often took place in parks.

3.5 *Peter Rabbit*

In the same year that *The Little White Bird* featuring Peter Pan was published, so too was the first of Beatrix Potter's series of twenty-three classic books for young children which also featured a 'Peter': *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

Figure 71: Beatrix Potter (Source: Taylor, Judy, *Beatrix Potter,* p. 155)

Beatrix Potter (1866-1943), writer and illustrator, was born in London to wealthy parents. Although the Potter family was based in Kensington, they frequently visited the countryside; summers were spent in Scotland and later the Lake District, and the family often visited Potter's paternal grandmother's country house in Hertfordshire. All of these places inspired within Potter and her brother, Bertram, a love of the countryside and wildlife despite their City upbringing.

Potter's parents exercised total control over their daughter to such an extent that she was twenty-eight years old when she was first permitted to travel alone on a train and both her proposed marriages were rejected by her parents. No doubt frustrated by the limitations imposed on her life, Potter threw herself into two of the few activities allowed her: painting and

keeping pets. Potter had shown a natural talent for painting and her parents had developed this by employing several drawing teachers for Potter and also by encouraging her to visit art exhibitions and galleries with her father. Potter was naturally attracted to natural history – both flora and fauna – and her studies of these are striking in their accuracy and detail. Potter collected a menagerie of animals around her, which it has been claimed were 'a substitute for human companionship'.[274] Art and animals were almost inevitably combined as Potter became skilled at capturing her pets on paper.

Like Carroll and Barrie, Potter's first foray into children's publishing was as a result of a story she told to a young child. Potter kept in regular contact with her old governess, Annie Moore, and her young son, Noel. It was whilst on holiday in 1893 that Potter wrote a picture letter to Noel about her pet rabbit, Peter, 'that was to become one of the most famous letters ever written'.[275]

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[274] Taylor, Judy, *Beatrix Potter* (Frederick Warne, 1987), p. 34.
[275] Ibid., p. 60.

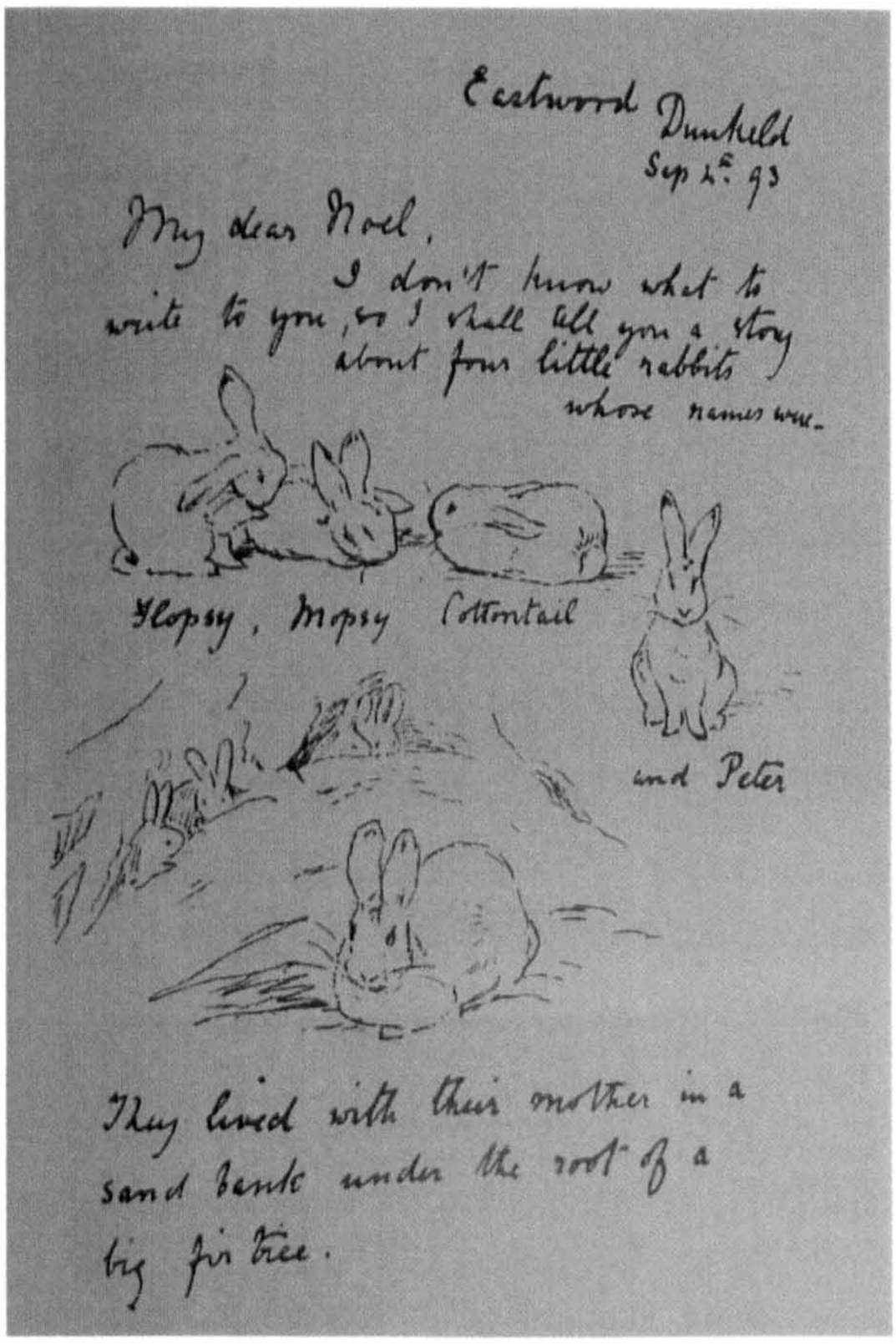

Figure 72: Letter from Beatrix Potter to Noel Moore, 4 September 1893. (Source: Taylor, Judy, *Beatrix Potter*, p. 61 (Original at V&A))

Several years later, encouraged by a family friend, Potter developed the story to send to publishers. Unfortunately all of them refused the manuscript so Potter decided to publish the book herself in December 1901, producing it in the small book format that she felt was most suitable for the little hands of her readers. The private edition came to the attention of the London publishers, Frederick Warne, who agreed to print it on the condition that Potter produce colour drawings to replace the black and white ones that had appeared in her private edition. The first Frederick Warne printing of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in 1902 sold out before publication.

Beatrix Potter's Gardens

From the very start, Potter's books reflected not only her love of animals and art, but also her passion for the past and tradition. It was whilst staying with her grandmother that Potter developed an 'obsession with her parental grandmother's reminiscences of her own youth',[276] which established Potter's lifelong interest in traditional values. This interest in the past and tradition was embraced in the two halves that form Potter's life. The first half was spent as dutiful daughter, living in London and producing children's books that had at their heart traditional values. Later in life Potter would move to the Lake District where she became involved with farming and was, 'actively involved in preserving the real natural system in her realization of rural farming traditions'.[277] In *The Tale of Peter Rabbit,* Potter perfectly captures the rural traditions in both illustration and text and in so doing created 'a children's classic whose appeal is ageless'.[278]

Many of Potter's books contain gardens and rural scenes, and perhaps the most famous of all of these is Mr McGregor's garden, as featured in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904) and *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* (1909). As with *Alice* and *Peter Pan,* the inspiration for the garden within the text came from an actual garden – or in Potter's case several gardens including Fawe Park and Gwaenynog Hall.

The scenery for *Peter Rabbit* was created through an amalgamation of sources. Potter is quoted as saying:

> Peter [Rabbit] was so composite and scattered in locality that I have found it troublesome to explain its various sources. If the vegetable garden and wickit [sic] gate were anywhere it was at Lingholme near Keswick; but it would be vain to look for it there, as a firm of landscape gardeners did away with it, and laid it out anew with paved walks

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[276] Carpenter, p. 139.
[277] Hitchmough, Wendy, *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (V&A Publications, 2005), p. 24.
[278] Potter, Beatrix, *The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter* (Warne & Co,1989 [originally published from 1902 onwards]), p. 10.

etc…The lily pond in Peter was at Tenby S[outh] Wales. The fir tree and some wood backgrounds near Keswick…Peter Rabbit's potting shed and the actual geraniums in Hertforshire – but what does it matter?[279]

Figure 73: The Lily Pond in Mr McGregor's Garden from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter (1902), p. 47. The inspiration for this drawing was Tenby in South Wales.

In 1903 the Potters rented Fawe Park, a large comfortable house in the Lake District. The kitchen garden, greenhouses, cold frames and potting shed were all to be depicted in *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny,* which Potter was working on at the time.

Potter often visited her uncle, Fred Burton, at his home, Gwaenynog Hall, near Denbigh from the 1890s. In 1909, whilst she was preparing for her book *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies,* she visited her uncle and made a number of studies of the garden there. Potter's preference was to draw from life, and Mr McGregor's garden in this book was inspired by her Uncle's Welsh walled garden, which was, 'the kind of practical country garden that she loved best – a random but fertile mixture of flowers, fruit

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[279] Parker, Peter, 'Gardening with Beatrix Potter', *Where Next Peter Rabbit?* Papers Presented at The Beatrix Potter Society Conference, Ambleside, England, August 2002 (The Beatrix Potter Society, 2003), pp. 96-109

and vegetables, with cabbages flourishing'.[280] Potter described the garden in her journal:

> The garden is very large, two-thirds surrounded by a red-brick wall with many apricots, and an inner circle of old grey apple trees on wooden espaliers. It is very productive but not tidy, the prettiest kind of garden, where bright old fashioned flowers grow amongst the currant bushes.[281]

Mr McGregor's garden is clearly based on this garden, as can be seen through Potter's illustration (Figure 74).

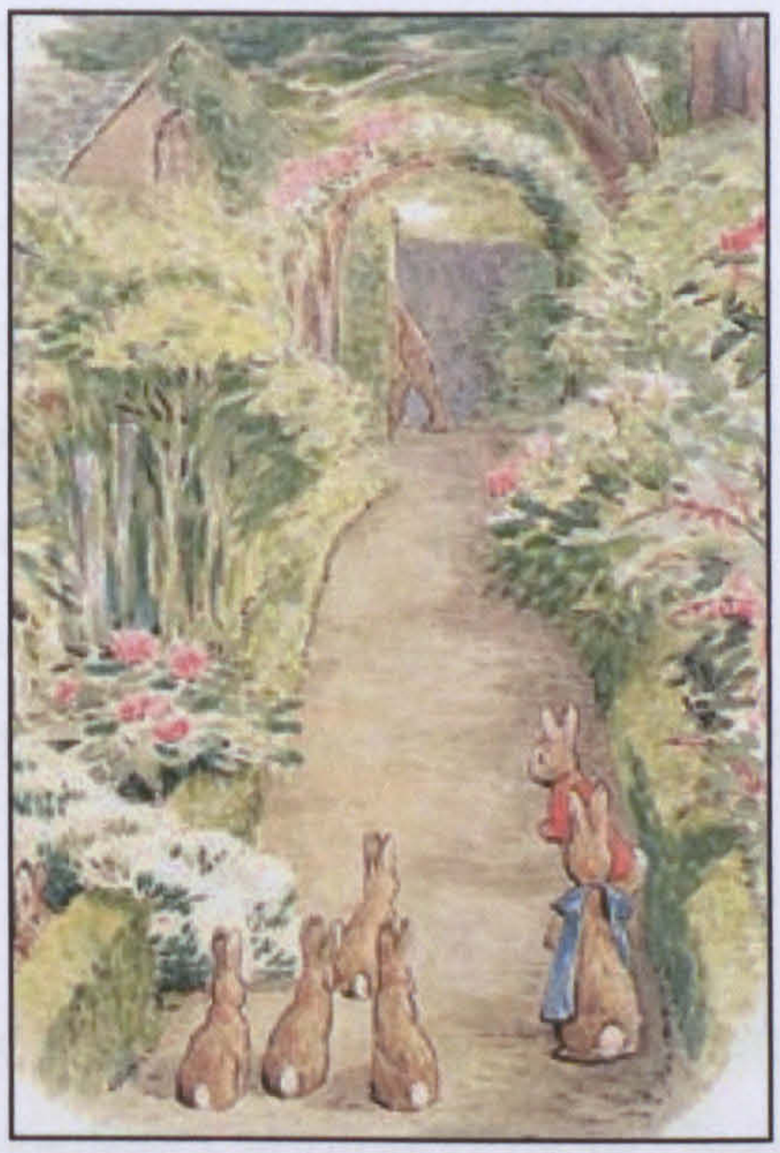

Figure 74: Mr McGregor's Garden (Source: *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*, p. 22)

[280] Lane, Margaret, *The Magic Years of Beatrix Potter* (Warne, 1978), p. 85.
[281] Potter, Beatrix, *The Journal of Beatrix Potter 1881-1897*, Tuesday 28 May 1896, p. 378.

Beatrix Potter and Education

Unlike *Alice* or *Peter Pan*, the educative aspects of Potter's books are very clear and fall into three obvious categories. The books encourage the development of reading skills, are an introduction to morals and reinforce the importance of traditional values.

Potter was very adamant about the physical format of her books, and their small size was intentionally designed to encourage young children to hold and read them. The text of the books is in the main suitably pitched at young readers, although part of Potter's unique style was the occasional integration of text that was clearly far too advanced for her young readers. For example: 'Peter gave himself up for lost, and shed big tears; but his sobs were overheard by some friendly sparrows, who flew to him in great excitement and implored him to exert himself'. [282] The insertion of advanced words within otherwise familiar text is clearly an educational technique to encourage the development of a child's vocabulary.

Potter's written work is also stylised by her lack of sentimentality. Nowhere is her matter-of-fact approach more clear than in Mrs Rabbit's explanation of Peter's father's death, 'he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor'.[283] This lack of sentimentality is in turn reflected in Potter's accompanying illustrations. Although the animals wear clothes, their anatomy and surroundings are both accurate, and it is clear that she worked from life.

The morals of each Potter story are simple. In *Peter Rabbit*, Peter is warned by his mother not to go into Mr McGregor's garden. Peter disobeys his mother and as a consequence is chased by Mr McGregor, losing his jacket and shoes as he tries to escape. Although he has enjoyed eating Mr McGregor's lettuces, French beans and radishes,

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[282] Potter, Beatrix, *The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter*, 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit', p. 15.
[283] Ibid., p. 11.

Peter is soon in tears. Once home, Peter is punished for his disobedience by not only feeling unwell, but also being made to go to bed with a dose of camomile tea whilst his siblings enjoy a supper of bread and milk and blackberries. In *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903), Nutkin (Figure 75) is punished for his rudeness to the owl, Old Brown, by losing his tail. Although the tales are based in the animal world, the lessons of listening to your mother and not being rude are clearly intended for the child readers.

Figure 75: Illustration from *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* by Beatrix Potter, p. 58.

The traditional values advocated by Potter are closely linked to her passion for the countryside. Later in life, with the purchase of Hill Top Farm in the Lake District and her transition into traditional farming, Potter had the opportunity to be proactive in preserving the character and traditions of the rural farms around the Lake District. When she was young, this passion was directed into her books, which are a combination of preserving country tradition and creating an Arcadia, which some have suggested was an attempt to recover the security of her childhood.[284]

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[284] Carpenter, p. 140.

Linked to Potter's educational depiction of traditional values is the use of her text and illustrations to introduce young children to gardening: 'For many people, Mr McGregor's garden is the first one that they ever encounter in a book'.[285] By introducing young readers to a traditional cottage garden through her detailed drawings, Potter subtly educated her young readers in the layout and style of such gardens. By so doing she contributed to keeping the tradition of such gardens alive, in much the same way as when the adult Peter Rabbit in *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* has his own nursery garden as an adult he bases it on the one he remembered from his youth - Mr McGregor's garden.

Figure 76: The Grown Peter Rabbit in his own nursery garden from *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* by Beatrix Potter, p. 12.

Traditional gardens are not only depicted in Mr McGregor's garden, but also in the many illustrations that were inspired by the scenery and villages of the Lake District. Potter was particularly inspired by the village of Sawrey. She described the village as being, 'nearly as perfect a place as I ever lived in',[286] with its 'flowery little gardens'.[287] An example of one of the gardens in Sawrey was illustrated in *The Tale of The Pie and the Patty-Pan* (1905). Potter captures the front garden of Buckle Yeat in

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[285] Parker, p. 96.
[286] Potter, Beatrix, *The Journal of Beatrix Potter 1881-1897*, Tuesday 17 November 1896 (Frederick Warne & Co, 1966), p. 422.
[287] Ibid., Tuesday 28 July 1896, p. 417.

Sawrey, transforming it into the garden of Duchess, one of the main characters of the book. The detail of Potter's illustration is such that individual plants are recognisable (Figure 77).

Figure 77: 'The Invitation' from *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Tin* by Beatrix Potter, p. 9. Lupins, roses, marigolds and carnations are amongst the plants that are clearly identifiable.

One adult reader claims: 'I once spent a long and happy time attempting to identify the individual flowers growing in this garden and thought I spotted antirrhinums, linaria, Welsh poppies, calendula, helichrysum, centaurea, mallow, sweet-william, Turk's cap lilies and a pink standard rose'.[288]

Through her books Potter succeeded in using gardens with which she was familiar to educate children in a variety of ways, including reading skills, moral values, and an appreciation of traditional gardens. Potter reinforced the words of her texts with illustrations that so charmingly and

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[288] Parker, p. 101.

yet accurately captured nature that an observant child would be able to identify the individual flowers in one of her garden illustrations. Potter's skill in achieving the link between entertaining child readers, whilst at the same time educating them using gardens, paved the way for writers such as Frances Hodgson Burnett to develop this technique to its full potential.

3.6 *The Secret Garden*

The best example of any children's book written during this period that features a garden through which children are developed mentally and physically is without doubt Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. *The Secret Garden* has become one of the great classics of children's literature, and Hodgson Burnett's biographer, M Laski, has described it as being 'one of the most satisfying children's books I know'.[289]

Published in 1911, *The Secret Garden* tells the story of Mary Lennox, an unhealthy, selfish nine year old. Following the death of her parents in India, Mary is sent to stay with her rich but unhappily widowed uncle at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire. The uncle spends most of his time travelling, leaving the bad-tempered, ugly Mary alone with a handful of servants. Left to her own devices, Mary stumbles upon a secret garden and her sickly cousin, Colin, both of which have been kept hidden from her. Together with Dickon, a young local boy with a passion for nature, Mary and Colin secretly bring the garden back to life and in so doing grow healthy, strong and kind.

Hodgson Burnett was a commercial writer and the book she wrote about a garden was not the development of a story told to a child, as was the case with those written by Carroll, Barrie or Potter. Nonetheless, *The Secret Garden* was inspired by an actual garden and a child and these two factors were key to the way in which Hodgson Burnett explored the ways in which a garden could be used to mentally and physically develop children.

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) was born in Manchester, but moved to America with her family when her father died and the family business collapsed. She began writing to aid the family finances and her

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[289] Laski, M, *Mrs Ewing, Molesworth and Hodgson Burnett* (Arthur Barker Ltd, 1950), p. 88.

talent was such that the best magazines were soon accepting her work, and she continued to be 'a prolific and very successful commercial writer for much of her life'.[290] Hodgson Burnett (Figure 78) married and had two sons, although the eldest, Lionel, died in his early teens having contracted consumption whilst Hodgson Burnett was abroad. The younger son, Vivian, was immortalised as the inspiration behind another of her very successful children's books, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886).

Figure 78: Frances Hodgson Burnett in 'The Secret Garden', Maytham Hall. Source: Bixler, Phyllis, *Frances Hodgson Burnett* (from Huntington Library, San Marion, California)

Despite her emigration, Hodgson Burnett maintained links with England and crossed the Atlantic thirty-two times and lived in London.[291] In 1898 Hodgson Burnett rented Maytham Hall in Kent. Dating from the eighteenth century, Maytham Hall had passed through the hands of a stream of tenants and had fallen somewhat into disrepair. Following a fire in 1893, the house was repaired and extended and it was shortly after

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[290] Hunt, p. 42.
[291] Carpenter, AS and Shirley, J, *Frances Hodgson Burnet: Beyond the Secret Garden* (Lemer Publications, 1990), p. 17.

this that Hodgson Burnett rented the eighteen bedroom property. Although renovations had taken place to the buildings, the grounds were neglected, particularly the original extensive Georgian walled gardens. Hodgson Burnett took it upon herself to take the garden in hand. A contemporary magazine article written by a visitor to Hodgson Burnett and Great Maytham quotes that 'When Mrs Burnett first went to Maytham it was nothing but an abandoned orchard, overgrown with weeds, which she, with a great love of gardening, saw the possibilities of and transformed'. [292]

Hodgson Burnett renovated the garden, often helping the gardeners herself. She records that she

> spent nearly three weeks kneeling on a small rubber mat on the grass edge of a heavenly old herbaceous border bed, which a big young gardener was trenching and remaking, while I followed him and tucked softly into the rich sweet damp mold [sic] the plants which were to bloom in loveliness for me in the summer.[293]

After the renovations Hodgson Burnett used the garden as her outdoor study, and it was in this garden that she wrote, *A Little Princess* and had the inspiration for *The Secret Garden.* Hodgson Burnett rented Maytham Hall for ten years, after which her rental agreement expired. Returning to America Hodgson Burnett decided to build herself a home in New York with a large garden. It was here that she was to write *The Secret Garden.*

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[292] Harwood, Charlotte, 'Mrs Frances Hodgson Burnett at Home: A visit to Maytham Hall, Rolvenden, Kent', *The Critic* (March, 1902), p. 233.
[293] Waters, Alison, *Maytham and The Secret Garden* (Unprinted, held at Great Maytham Archives, printed 1992), p. 3.

Maytham Hall: The Inspiration for *The Secret Garden*

Although written in America, it is obvious from a site visit to Maytham Hall that the walled garden featured in *The Secret Garden* was based on that at Maytham Hall. The walled garden at Maytham Hall is distinctive as it is not the large, open space enclosed by walls on four sides that is so often associated with a kitchen garden. Rather it is sub-divided into two main walled gardens, each surrounded by tall, red brick walls (Figure 79).

Figure 79: View of Walled gardens at Maytham Hall (Source: Author's Photograph). Note the sub-division of the walled garden into two main gardens.

Although the current walled garden is only divided into two, the 1898 Ordnance Survey Plan indicates that the walled garden was, at the time of Hodgson Burnett's tenancy, further subdivided into several smaller gardens (Figures 80 and 81).

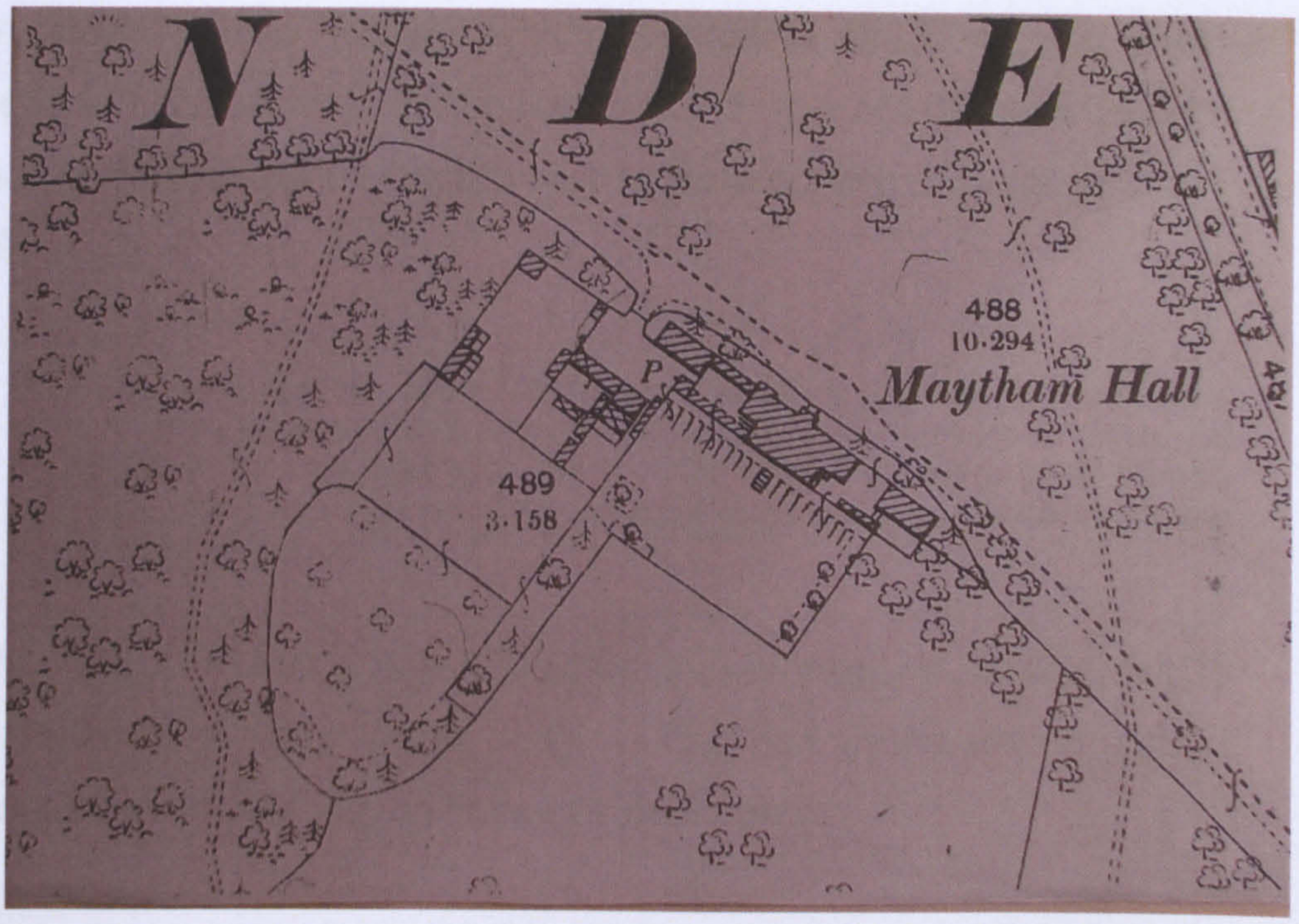

Figure 80: Plan of Maytham Hall and Gardens from 1898 (2nd Edition) Ordnance Survey, 25" to 1 mile. (Source: British Library)

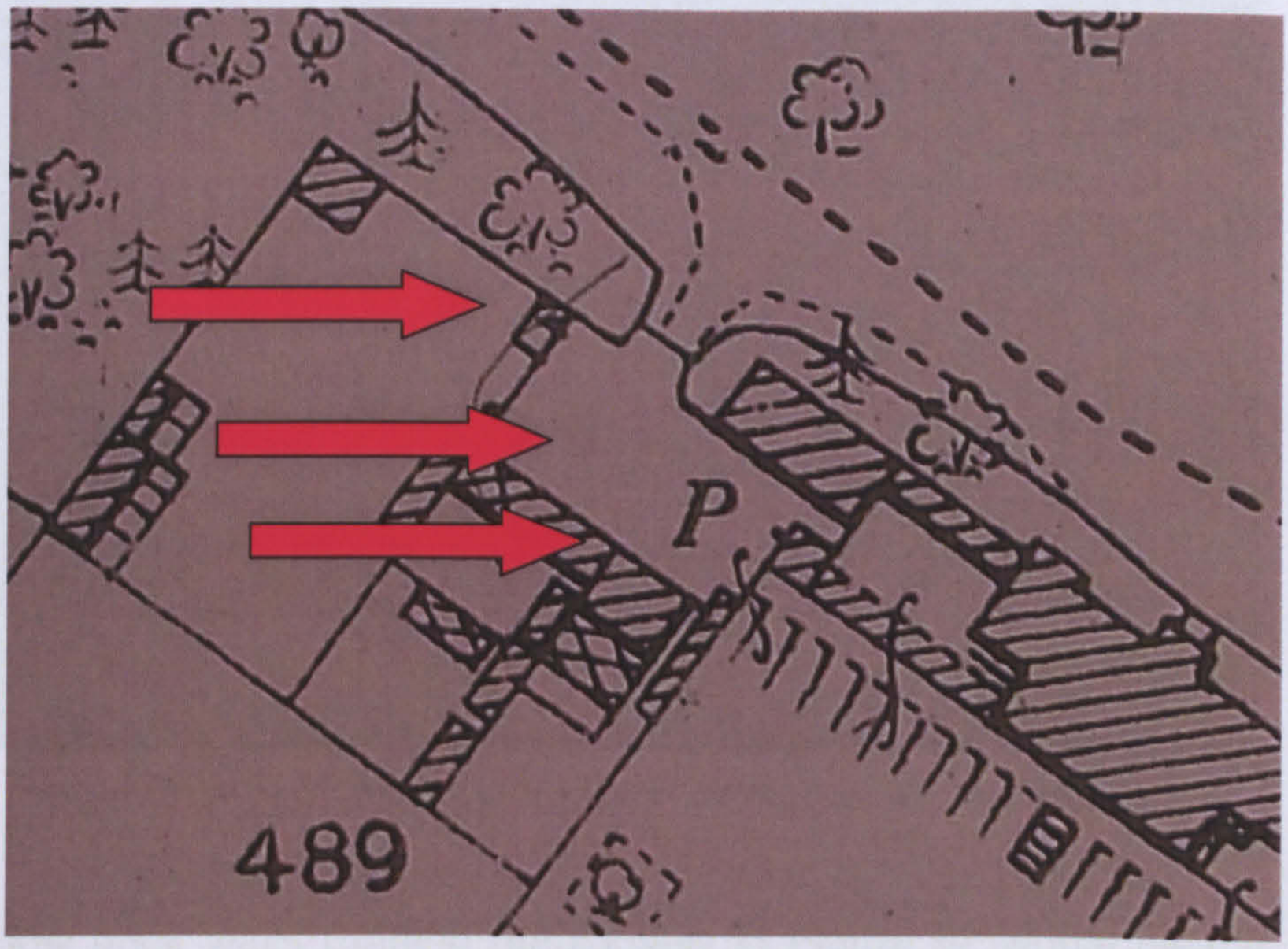

Figure 81: Detail of walled garden (indicated by red arrows) from Plan of Maytham Hall and Gardens from 1898 (2nd Edition) Ordnance Survey, 25" to 1 mile. (Source: British Library)

Hodgson Burnett clearly describes the compartmentalised walled garden in the text of *The Secret Garden:* 'She [Mary] went through the door and found that it was a garden with walls all around it and that it was only one

of several walled gardens which seemed to open into one another'.[294] Hodgson Burnett then continues to provide a more detailed description of the part of the walled garden that is featured in the foreground of Figure 79:

> She saw another open green door, revealing bushes and pathways between beds containing winter vegetables. Fruit trees were trained flat against the wall, and over some of the beds there were glass frames. The place was bare and ugly enough, Mary thought, as she stood and stared about her.[295]

Although it is now much neglected and overgrown, a site visit to Maytham Hall nonetheless confirms that part of the walled garden clearly matches Hodgson Burnett's description.

Figure 82: Kitchen Garden at Maytham Hall (Source: Author's Photograph)

The low brick walls running horizontally in Figure 82 would clearly once have contained glass frames, as can be seen more clearly in Figure 83.

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[294] Hodgson Burnett, F, *The Secret Garden*, p. 34.
[295] Ibid.

Figure 83: Detail of old glass frames in the Kitchen Garden at Maytham Hall (Source: Author's Photograph)

When looking at the background of both Figures 82 and 83, it is also evident that, as would be expected, fruit trees were grown against the walls of the garden.

Mary, guided by a friendly robin, finds the door to the inner 'Secret Garden' hidden behind overgrown ivy. Although there are several entrances into the main part of the walled garden at Maytham, there are also two entrances that have, over time, been bricked over.

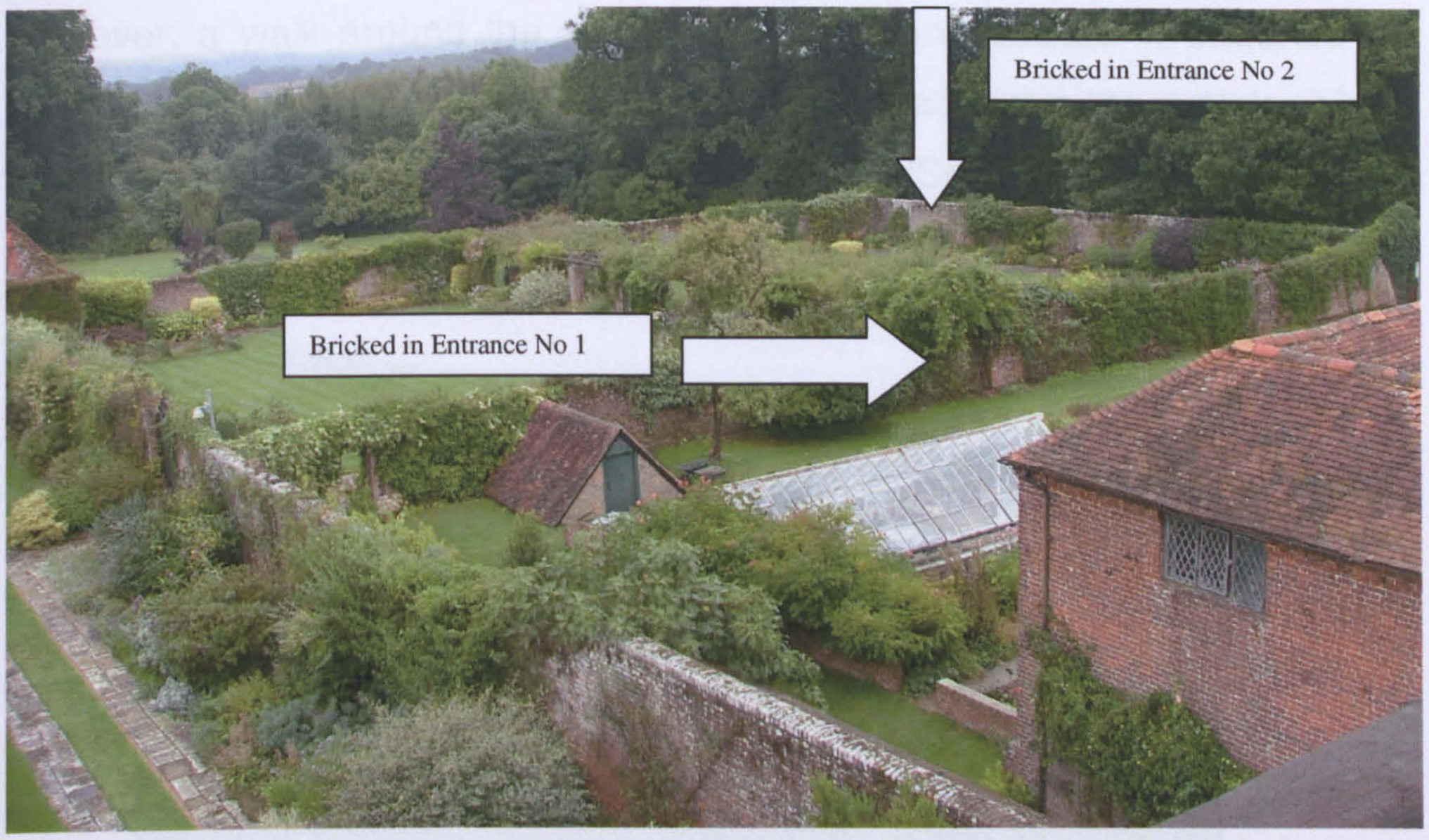

Figure 84: View of the walled garden at Maytham indicating sites of 2 former entrances into the walled garden. (Source: Author's Photograph)

Local legend[296] has suggested that the now bricked over entrance in the wall dividing the vegetable garden and the main walled garden (indicated in Figure 84 as Entrance No 1) was the one that Hodgson Burnett describes in *The Secret Garden*. A close-up photograph of this is shown in Figure 85.

Figure 85: Bricked over doorway between the Kitchen Garden and the main walled garden at Maytham Hall (Source: Author's Photograph)

[296] Cited by Roger Watts, Maytham Hall Estate Manager, 2006.

However, a walk around the site reveals a second bricked in entrance (shown as Entrance No 2 in Figure 84), which leads from the exterior of the main walled garden directly into the larger, 'Secret Garden' (Figure 86).

Figure 86: 2nd bricked in entrance into the walled garden (indicated as 'Bricked in Entrance No 2' in Figure 84). (Source: Author's Photograph)

A reading of the text seems to indicate that it is this entrance, although ignored by local legend, that far more closely resembles the one that leads Mary into the secret garden:

> Mary skipped round all the gardens and round the orchard, resting every few minutes. At length she went to her own special walk...One of the nice little gusts of wind rushed down the walk, and it was stronger than the rest. It was strong enough to wave the branches of the trees, and it was more than strong enough to sway the trailing sprays of untrimmed ivy hanging from the wall...then she took a long breath and looked behind her up the long walk to see if anyone was coming.[297]

The second bricked-in entrance to the walled garden is indeed outside of the walled garden itself and it adjacent to a 'long walk' (Figure 87).

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[297] Hodgson Burnett, F, *The Secret Garden*, pp. 75-76.

Figure 87: The walkway running adjacent to the now bricked-in entrance to the kitchen garden. The bricked in entrance is just visible at the far end of the brick wall. (Source: Author's Photograph)

Education in *The Secret Garden*

It is clear that the garden at Maytham Hall provided the physical inspiration for Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden.* This garden setting was also to be the conduit for the educational themes of the book. These in turn were inspired by several aspects of Hodgson Burnett's character and life – namely her love of gardening, her Christianity and the death of her son from tuberculosis.

Hodgson Burnett had always possessed 'an adoration of nature and growing things',[298] and this was intensified when she moved to Maytham Hall in 1898. It was the walled garden of Maytham Hall that inspired *The Secret Garden* and consolidated Hodgson Burnett's passion for gardening. Hodgson Burnett, like so many other authors interested in gardening, used her literature to educate and inspire an enthusiasm in children for horticulture. Much basic horticultural knowledge is imparted in *The Secret Garden* from digging techniques, to soil composition, to plants and 'Someone once said you could learn the elements of pruning roses from *The Secret* Garden and another large part of the attraction of the book is its exactly accurate descriptions of real gardening'.[299] It is therefore not surprising to find that the main educating influence in *The Secret Garden* is nature.

Dickon, the younger brother of Mary's maid, Martha, although almost illiterate, is the closest of all three children in the book to nature and consequently the most rounded character and the most likeable. Without exception, every adult and child in the book instinctively trusts and likes Dickon and these sentiments are shared by the animal kingdom, which Dickon is constantly associated with. Despite his lack of education and obvious poverty, Dickon is healthy and happy, and this, suggests Hodgson Burnett, is due to his love and knowledge of nature. It is Dickon

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[298] Burnett, Vivian, *The Romantick* [sic] *Lady* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 30.
[299] Thwaite, Ann, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett* (Secker and Warburg, 1974), p. 222.

who shows Mary and Colin how to garden and it is he who selects the seeds to be planted in the secret garden. Mary and Colin, who have never previously been close to nature - Mary because she was in India and Colin because he was in bed - are unhealthy and unhappy. This situation is only reversed as they learn about nature and begin to tend the garden. The children learn about nature in the walled garden, which, rather like a school, is a protected, safe environment conducive to education. As the children learn to love nature (Mary's first kiss is to the crocuses) so they also learn to love other people. This is in keeping with the Romantic belief that nature can educate children: '*The Secret Garden*...belongs to a modern pastoral tradition which suggests that there is a special affinity between the child and nature and that the child can be beneficially educated by nature'.[300]

This Romantic ideal is further established in the first edition of *The Secret Garden* through Charles Robinson's illustrations. The children are dressed in timeless outfits and appear pretty and happy, surrounded by the beauty of nature.

Figure 88: 'He would lie on the grass "watching things growing"'. Illustration by Charles Robinson for *The Secret Garden.*

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[300] Bixler Koppes, P 'Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A Generic Analysis of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden*', *Annual of The Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and The Children's Literature Association*, 7 (1978), p. 199.

Charles Robinson (1870-1937) had already established himself as a children's illustrator through his illustrations for Robert Louis Stevenson's, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1895). Coming from a family of illustrators, he illustrated over 100 books and his graceful, sensitive style perfectly suited *The Secret Garden*. It should, however, be noted that of all the relationships between author and illustrator explored within this study, this is perhaps the only one in which the illustrations are not as well known as the text.

Robinson created just eight illustrations for the first edition of *The Secret Garden,* and only one of these is set in the secret garden itself (Figure 88). Although there is no evidence to suggest whether or not Robinson visited Maytham Hall prior to creating his illustrations, it is interesting to note the pink rose which Robinson chooses for the background of this image closely resembles the rose Madame Laurette Messimy, which was planted in abundance at Maytham Hall by Hodgson Burnett. Following a visit to Maytham Hall, Sir James Blyth gave Hodgson Burnett three hundred Madame Laurette Messimy roses and these were planted in the walled garden.[301] A visit to the Maytham Hall shows that there are still several of these roses in the walled garden.

Figure 89: Madame Laurette Messimy roses in the walled garden at Maytham Hall (Source: Author's Photograph)

[301] Thwaite, p. 182.

The seasons, as illustrated through the developments in the garden, parallel the changes in Mary and Colin. At the start of the book it is winter and like the garden Mary and Colin are stunted in growth both physically and spiritually. However, as the spring works its 'magic' in the garden; bringing the plants to life, so too does it bring the children to life. The fresh air of the garden and the exercise of digging brings colour to the pale children's face and whets their appetites, so encouraging them to eat more and gain weight and muscle. By the end of the book it is autumn, the time of harvest, and Colin is no longer a sickly, thin, pale boy, but, 'a tall boy and a handsome one. He was glowing with life'.[302] The garden also improves the children's character. It provides them with an interest in life and gives Colin, literally, a reason to live, distracting him from his hypochondria. The garden encourages the children to talk and interact with one another and in so doing develops their social skills. The conversations between Mary, Colin and Dickon initially centred around the garden and this forms the basis of the first friendships that either Mary or Colin have experienced and with this friendship comes happiness: 'On the simplest plane, Mrs Burnett's answer to these children is *cultivez votre jardin*. She is of course right. No one who has become interested in tending a garden has ever remained wholly unhappy'.[303] Using the garden as a means of inspiring social interaction between children is a technique that was to prove key to Margaret McMillan's open-air nursery school which would be opened in 1914, three years after the publication of *The Secret Garden* as will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Hodgson Burnett has clearly utilised her knowledge of gardens and gardening to suggest a possible way of providing children with a mental and physical education. However she also used her own Christian beliefs to introduce spirituality to the text.

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[302] Hodgson-Burnett, F, *The Secret Garden*, p. 302.
[303] Laski, p. 89.

Despite leading the somewhat unconventional and bohemian life of a successful American author, Hodgson Burnett was a Christian. Her surviving son, Vivian, wrote of her that 'The bible was her constant companion',[304] and it is evident that Christian values are woven into the story. In *The Secret Garden*, the children are aware of a force beyond themselves, which they see in the kindness of those around them and in nature, and they learn that by having faith in what they can only describe as 'magic' it has the power to change their lives, allowing them to grow physically and spiritually. When Colin feels strong and well towards the end of the book, he wants to, 'shout out something – something thankful, joyful!'[305] and at the suggestion of the old gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, is taught, by Dickon, to sing the Doxology.

> Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
> Praise Him all creatures here below,
> Praise Him above ye Heavenly Host,
> Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
> Amen.[306]

Colin, whose 'illness' had prevented him from attending church, clearly has no understanding of the religious context of this 'very nice song',[307] but he does know that it expresses his feelings, 'Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic...Perhaps they are both the same'.[308]

Although Colin's illness is something of a mystery, there can be little doubt that it echoes the illness of Hodgson Burnett's own son, Lionel, who died from tuberculosis at the age of fifteen in 1890. Unlike Lionel, Colin is able to gain back his health and this is primarily achieved through the fresh and exercise provided in the secret garden. Although the money earned from her writing permitted Hodgson Burnett to provide her son with the best care available at the time, including a sanatorium in Gobersdorf in the pine forests of South Germany, it was not enough to

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[304] Burnett, Vivian, *The Romantick* [sic] *Lady*, p. 374.
[305] Hodgson-Burnett, F, *The Secret Garden*, p. 279.
[306] Ibid., p. 280.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.

save her son from being a victim of the tuberculosis epidemic that raged in Washington in 1890. There is no direct evidence to support it, but it seems likely that Hodgson Burnett would have been aware of the advances that were made in the treatment of tuberculosis at the start of the twentieth century, which was primarily exposure to fresh air and sunshine. With this in mind it seems highly likely that her depiction of Colin's recovery, to which fresh air and exercise was instrumental, reflected that which could have been her own son's had he fallen ill twenty years later.

The parallel between Lionel and Colin is further established through Colin's desire to become a scientist. The father of Hodgson Burnett's children was a doctor and, prior to his death, Lionel had shown a strong aptitude towards science; in particular showing a fascination with electricity. Despite his illness, Colin has taught himself a great deal by reading, and Hodgson Burnett suggests that his self-taught knowledge will benefit him, and mankind, later in life. Colin has ambitions to become a scientist and to develop an inquisitive, questioning, scientific mind. As the book progresses, it is this character that Hodgson Burnett brings to the fore and it has been suggested that the race he is winning when he literally runs into his father at the end of the book represents how he will also race ahead of both Mary and Dickon later in life, thanks in part to his self-education.[309] Perhaps through Colin's future Hodgson Burnett was forecasting how Lionel's life may have been had he not died at the age of fifteen.

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[309] Lennox Keyser, '"Quite Contrary": Frances Hodgson-Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, *Annual of The Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and The Children's Literature Association*, 11 (1983), p. 3.

3.7 The Popularity of the Theme of the Garden in Children's Literature and the Potential of Further Research

Despite having hitherto been somewhat neglected, it is clear that children's literature is as potentially a rich resource for garden historians as it has proven to be for literary academics. Furthermore, the discipline of garden history can provide new, innovative, justified and practical interpretations of the texts that often seem to have eluded literary scholars – in this instance that the garden was used increasingly to educate and develop children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Whilst the authors and illustrators discussed within this chapter provide a range of examples and approaches to the depiction of gardens within children's literature, it should be emphasised that these are merely representative of many texts that explore this theme from this period. A number of key writers and illustrators have been omitted for no reason other than the constraints of this chapter. A more detailed, extensive and longer study would no doubt have encompassed the Christian yet charmingly engaging tales of Mrs Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) and Julia Horatia Ewing's *Mary's Meadow* (1884); the children's stories of Oscar Wilde, with particular reference to 'The Selfish Giant' which was included in his book of stories for children, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888); Robert Louis Stevenson's classic book of poetry, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1895), the hauntingly mysterious *The Wonderful Garden* (1911) by E Nesbit, Kenneth Graham's *The Wind in the Willow* (1913) AA Milne's classic, *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) which has forever immortalised the Ashdown Forest as an Arcadian idyll for many readers, and *Milly-Molly-Mandy,* Joyce Lankester Brisley's tales for young children, which picked up the mantel from Beatrix Potter. Illustrators omitted, but certainly not overlooked, include Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) who, with her intense love of plants and gardens and delicate drawings, created 'an idyllic Gainsborough-inspired rural paradise';[310]

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[310] Dalby, Richard, *The Golden Age of Children's Book Illustration* (Gallery Books, 1991), p. 26.

Walter Crane (1845-1915) who was the first to attempt to mass-produce well-drawn and designed colour books for children, thus establishing his reputation as the leading, 'nursery illustrator';[311] Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886); L Leslie Brooke (1862-1940); Mabel Lucie Attwell (1879-1964) and Cicely Mary Barker (1895-1973), creator of *The Flower Fairies*.

In almost every example explored within this chapter it is clear that the authors, often reinforced by the art of their illustrators, increasingly used the image of the garden or landscape to explore how 'closeness to the natural world can promote physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health'.[312] The majority of writers used the theme of the garden as a means of potentially encouraging the 'spiritual health'[313] of child readers; although this was in two distinctively different ways. Carpenter claims that 'almost without exception, the authors of the outstanding English children's books that appeared between 1860 and 1930 rejected, or had doubts about, conventional religious teaching'.[314] Carpenter further expands that Carroll, Potter, Barrie and Milne all rejected conventional Christianity and explored spiritual alternatives within their writing. Certainly this is true in the examples Carpenter gives, but he overlooks the work of Mrs Molesworth, Julia Hortia Ewing, Joyce Lankester Brisley, Frances Hodgson Burnett and Oscar Wilde. Carpenter's explanation for the popular rejection of conventional Christianity by children's authors is that it was inspired by the uncertain times that the authors lived through. During the Victorian and Edwardian eras there were rapid increases in industrialisation, urbanisation and major scientific developments that offered alternative explanations for the creation of man and the world to the Bible. Carpenter argues that such events made many question and reject conventional religion and to seek spiritual solace elsewhere. Consequently many authors looked back

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[311] Ibid., p. 22.
[312] Darcy, Jane, 'The Representation of Nature in *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Volume 19, No 2, December 1995, p. 216.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Carpenter, p. 13.

towards the time of pre-industrialization which they inevitably romanticised through their depiction of an Arcadian landscape and the spirituality associated with this, particularly in reference to children.

It is something of an irony that the industrialisation that so many authors rejected provided them with the affluent middle class who were their key market, as well as the modern technology that allowed their work to be cheaply transported by train and published in a format that maximised the appeal of their books to that market. Throughout this study the illustrators of the books have been explored, and it is evident that in the majority of cases the drawings have become inseparable from the author's text. Modern printing methods allowed better illustrations and showed to the very best the work of the outstanding illustrators of the day. It is not possible to think of Alice without envisaging Tenniel's blonde, long-haired Alice and the characters she encountered; or *The Wind in the Willows* without Shepard's line drawings or *Peter Pan* without the whimsical drawings of Rackham.

The popularity of the theme of the garden and the landscape also owed much to the passion and knowledge of the natural world that so many authors wrote of, or illustrators drew. Jane Darcy offers an explanation for this:

> A hundred years ago people (including writers) were actually closer to rural life and its customs than we are. A reading of any late Victorian/Edwardian writer who cares to describe the countryside for whatever reason testifies to their greater and more intimate knowledge of the landscapes and the flora and fauna of the English countryside. Such knowledge, born of close contact with the natural world, is rarely found – except among specialists and enthusiasts – in the later twentieth century.[315]

This is certainly true of most of the authors explored within this study. Carroll was a keen walker[316] and regular visitor to the Oxford Botanic Gardens and the first biography of him that was written shortly after his

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[315] Darcy, p. 213.
[316] Carroll's dairies make many references to the walks he made.

death, records that 'Lewis Carroll's mind was completely at one with nature'.[317] Potter had an extensive knowledge of both flora and fauna and Hodgson Burnett 'had an absolute passion for the country'.[318] As society became increasingly urbanised, it is natural that this knowledge and passion should begin to fade with later authors.

However, Carpenter offers a further explanation as to the decline in the imagery of Arcadian landscapes in children's literature after the second decade of the twentieth century:

> A fairly firm case *can*, in fact, be made for the First World War as the cut-off point between the classic children's books and the present day, with Milne regarded as a survivor of the Edwardians rather than belonging truly to the post-war world. It must have been harder to dream up River Banks and Never Never Lands after the experience of the Somme. Moreover, Arcadian writing for children was quite clearly part of a general tendency towards idyllic, ruralist fantasy among many English authors of the pre-war period.[319]

It cannot be denied that gardens, and more particularly the landscape, have occurred as a theme subsequent to World War One, but rarely in the same nostalgic, golden way. Like Carroll with *Alice,* Tolkien and Nesbit created a landscape set within another 'magical' world but these were less 'Wonderlands' and more places of great foreboding.

Whilst children's literature has certainly developed as an academic discipline[320] it is interesting and reassuring to note that the majority of the books made reference to within this study have remained in print to the present-day. With the increase in public awareness of the importance of reading many parents, particularly those of young children, are buying books.[321] There are several potential reasons as to why the books that parents chose to buy should include so many of those included in this study. These include the adult's own nostalgic memories associated with books remembered from their own childhood that they, in turn, wish to

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[317] Collingwood, p. 126.
[318] Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew Best of All* (Warne & Co, 1893), p. 226.
[319] Carpenter, p. 210.
[320] Hunt, pp. 294-293 gives a precis of the development of the academic study of children's literature from the 1970s.
[321] Hunt, p. 319.

pass on to their own children, and the modern-day romanticism that is now associated with childhood and which echoes the themes found in so many of the books of the 'golden age' of children's literature. However, the popularity of these books can also be linked to their being adapted for film and television: 'English children's novels have proved not only a cornerstone of national literature, but have also propped up the English film industry. *From Alice in Wonderland* to *Harry Potter* via *Peter Pan*...it seems the world has an insatiable appetite for English children's stories'.[322]

Figure 90: Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951)

The popularity of film and television adaptations of popular children's books was the inspiration behind 'Storybook England' which is part of the Tourist Information's 'Visit England' campaign, which 'for the first time offers a comprehensive guide to the location of favourite children's books'.[323] The brochure and website lists thirty-eight children's books giving details of the whereabouts of the literary or film locations of each.

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[322] Barrett, Frank, 'Finding Wonderland', *The Mail on Sunday* (17 September 2006), p. 8.
[323] Barrett, p. 8.

These include Carroll's Oxford, Barrie's Kensington Gardens, Hodgson Burnett's Maytham Hall, Potter's Lake District, Grahame's Thames and Milne's Ashdown Forest.[324]

Although clearly not aimed at the academic, it is hoped by the author that this campaign will encourage a knowledge and interest in the gardens and landscapes that inspired many of the books explored in this chapter, and in so doing inspire further study in an area that had been much overlooked but is rich in potential resources for research.

Figure 91: Illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith from *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson, 1905 Edition.

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[324] *Enjoy England: Story Book England* (The British Tourist Office, 2006). The website is www.enjoyengland.com/storybook.

4.
THE LONDON CHILD AND THE SCHOOL GARDEN

4.1 Open-Air Schools in London 1907 – 1939

Although simple in concept, the open-air school movement has been described as 'one of the most interesting and decided changes undertaken by school management for many decades'.[325] Open-air schools are particularly pertinent to this study as the first such schools in Britain were established in London by the London County Council (LCC). From here the experiment was monitored with great interest, and as a result subsequently spread to the provinces. However, the open-air school had a much wider influence than merely through the spread of similar schools. The basic principles of the open-air school would gradually be adopted, adapted and incorporated into both nursery and mainstream education, revolutionising educational methodology and the environment in which this education took place. The simple theory was that if the methods adopted by the open-air schools were so beneficial to sick children 'how much could they do for children who were well?'.[326]

It is almost unbelievable that the pioneering open-air schools of London and the subsequent use of nature and gardens in the curriculum of general London schools have received such modest academic attention. Very little secondary material has been published on them, and consequently research for this study has generally relied upon original archival sources. A handful of articles have been published on the open-air movement, together with one book on the open-air schools of Birmingham, and a small volume about Bristol,[327] and some mention is

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[325] Kingsley, Sherman C, and Dresslar, FB, *Open Air Schools* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1917), p. 7.
[326] Mrs J Cunning, 'The Need for Open Air Schools for Children of the Upper and Middle Classes' pp. 65-66 in Kelynack, T K, *The Year Book of Open Air Schools and Children's Sanatoria 1915* (John Bale, 1915), p. 66.
[327] Wilmot, F and Saul, P, *A Breath of Fresh Air: Birmingham's Open Air Schools 1911*-1970 (Phillimore, 1998) and Shorey, Jeannie, *The Open Air Schools of Bristol, 1913-1957* (Bristol University, 1992).

made in at least one thesis[328] but London, where the movement began, appears thus far to have been overlooked.

[328] Hickman, Clare, *"Vis Medicatrix Naturae": The Design and Use of Landscapes in England for Therapeutic Purposes Since 1800* (Bristol University, 2006)

4.2 The Inspiration and Influences for the Creation of Open-Air Schools in London

It would be difficult to understand the context of the topic without briefly expanding on the introduction to this thesis to understand how historical and political events contributed to the creation of open-air schools and consequently the popularity of the use of gardens and nature in education during this period.

Britain was slow in comparison to many other countries in providing a state system of education for all children, as there was simply little motivation for the government to do so. The wealthy either educated their children at home or in fee-paying schools, whilst education was often regarded as unnecessary for the working-class. Following the Industrial Revolution, many of Britain's working-class were engaged in factory work or coal-mining; neither of which required a literate workforce. Working-class children were usually not encouraged to attend school as they were regarded as a cheap source of labour, and their families welcomed the extra income they generated. For those working-class children who did receive some schooling, a rudimentary education was provided primarily by charitable organisations and in particular by religious institutions. By the 1860s and 1870s, it became increasingly obvious to the government that Britain, with its uneducated workforce, was falling behind other European countries, and there was considerable concern that Britain would lose its industrial lead to other counties, particularly Germany. German industry was flourishing, and this was generally attributed to its superior state primary schools:[329]

> With German pencils being used by English children, German paper being made into English government postcards, German velvets adorning English houses, German engines replacing British ones on foreign rails, and German sugar being used to sweeten English tea, a state of industrial paranoia was generated in England.[330]

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[329] Parker, F and B J, *Education in England and Wales* (Garland Publishing, 1991), p. xli.
[330] Armytage, W H G, *The German Influence on English Education* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 64.

Inspired by such competition, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed huge and rapid developments in the provision of education and state welfare for British children.

The basis for the state system of education in Britain was created with the 1870 (Forster) Education Act. This Act, regarded as 'the first major Education Act',[331] ensured the provision of education for all children, although schools were only created in areas where no other church or private primary school existed. It marked the beginning of the provision of education for all and the state's recognition that: 'Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity...We must make up for the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual'.[332] However, primary education was still neither compulsory nor free. It was not until ten years later that education was made obligatory for all children from the ages of five to ten, rising to eleven in 1893, twelve in 1899, and fourteen under the 1918 Education Act. The 1918 Education Act also made full-time attendance at school obligatory, putting an end to 'part-timer' children who spent their day divided between work and school, and with the 1891 Elementary Education Act, the majority of public elementary schools became free.

The government's growing awareness that not all children could be educated in the same place was illustrated through the passing of the 1893 Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, which allowed for the establishment of special schools for blind and deaf children, and the 1899 Elementary (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, which although it did not impose the necessity of identifying and providing education for such children by the local authorities, did give them permission to do so if they wished to exercise this. In 1899 the Board of Education was created and three years later so too were Local Education Authorities (LEAs), who were responsible for promoting all forms of education. Thus far, the

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[331] Cook, Chris and Stevenson, J, *Modern British History 1714-1987* (Longman, 1988), p. 117.
[332] W E Forster, Vice-President of the Council, Introducing the Elementary Education Bill, in the House of Commons, February 17th, 1870, as included in Maclure, J S, *Educational Documents* (1990), pp. 104-5.

government's role in education was primarily to ensure the provision of academic opportunities for all children. This focus was to shift as a result of the Boer War at the start of the twentieth century.

Medical examinations of recruits for the Boer War identified that on average an alarming forty per cent of the recruits were found to be unfit for army service, whilst in cities such as Manchester the percentage was as high as ninety.[333] The consequence of this was widespread concern about the physical condition of the nation and a report by the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904). Following the report, the Board of Education immediately implemented that the topics of physical education and hygiene be compulsory parts of the teacher-training syllabus.[334] From this point, there appears to have been a shift in the government's attitude towards the provision of education and children in general. The government were no longer just concerned with the education of children, but also their physical welfare: 'the question of the physical condition of the people is one of the most pressing and insistent national problems'.[335] In 1906, fuelled by the finds of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904), public money was authorised to be spent on providing school meals for deprived children, many of whom were malnourished,[336] and a year later the LEAs were required to provide medical inspections for all children. Once again, as with the provision of state education, Britain was behind the rest of the developed world in introducing school medicals officers.[337]

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[333] Cruickshank, Marjorie, 'The Open Air School Movement in English Education', *Paedagogica Historica* VIm XVII/1 p. 62. (citing *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, Minutes of Evidence,* Vol. II, 1904, Cmd. 2210, p. 123.).

[334] In the year 1908-9 hygiene and physical training were compulsory subjects which students in Training Colleges were required to take for the Certificate of Education (see Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1908 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education* 1910, p. 233).

[335] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1908 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education,* p. 130.

[336] The *Annual Report for 1915 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education* identified that at least 10% of all children in public elementary schools were suffering from malnutrition, p. 32.

[337] Between 1874-1906 school medical officers were appointed in at least twenty different countries including Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, France, Holland, Belgium, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Portugal, Spain , Argentina, Chile, the United States and Japan (Ref: Harris, Bernard, *The Health of the Schoolchild* (1995), p. 29.).

The school medical inspections identified that an estimated seven to ten per cent of children were excluded from mainstream education on the grounds that they were 'backward'.[338] These children were not 'mentally deficient', but rather their education had been hindered due to mild to moderate diseases, the consequence of which was that they had fallen behind their peers academically. 'Backward' children commonly suffered from tuberculosis, anaemia, malnutrition and nervousness,[339] all of which could be attributed to the appalling working-class living conditions of an increasingly urban society.[340] Poverty and cramped accommodation resulted in a lack of nourishing food, fresh air and rest; and for some children this invariably manifested itself in disease.

Until the early twentieth century, children who suffered with mild to moderate diseases had either been educated at the expense of their health or nursed at the expense of their education. The creation of the open-air school brought together educationalists and doctors to create a programme that would encourage both the mental and physical health of the child. The basic principles of the open-air school were simple. The school was in the open air, and it:

> Comprises a way of life and a system of treatment, including the following –
>
> 1. Fresh air and sunlight.
> 2. Proper diet.
> 3. Rest.
> 4. The hygienic way of life.
> 5. Individual attention.
> 6. Medical treatment.
> 7. Special educational methods.[341]

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[338] Broughton, Hugh, *The Open Air School* (Pitman, 1914), p. 13.
[339] Paraphrased from an extract by Arthur Williamson, teacher at Shooter's Hill Open Air School (also known as Shrewsbury House) quoted in Kelynack, p. 297.
[340] Kelynack, p. 1, gives an unreferenced statistic stating that in 1801 16.7% of the population of England lived in towns of over 20,000 people. By 1912 this had risen to 61.7%.
[341] Broughton, p. 18. Paraphrasing the words of Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education in *Annual Report for 1912 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education,* pp. 256-257.

The Inspiration for England's First Open-Air School: Charlottenburg, Germany

England's first open-air school was introduced by the LCC in 1907 as a three month experiment in London's Bostall Wood. This experiment was inspired by the success of the world's first open-air school in Germany some three years earlier. Germany's school medical inspections, which had been introduced in the early 1890s,[342] had similarly identified a group of elementary children who were, 'so backward as to be unfit for the ordinary school, and yet such as could not be classified with the mentally deficient'.[343] The open-air school at Charlottenburg, a suburb of Berlin, was created to solve the problem of what to do with such children.

It is clear that the LCC followed with great interest the innovative educational work being carried out in Germany during the previous few years. Dr Frederick Rose, a medical officer for the LCC, had visited the Charlottenburg site twice. The result of his visits was that he became 'an enthusiastic convert to the cause of open-air education'.[344] Rose appears to have been one of the main advocators of undertaking similar experiments in Britain, and was a main contributor to the 1907 report published by the LCC Education Committee.[345] This report included a full account of the open-air schools established Germany, as well as reports of the first experiment carried out in London to create a similar school in London's Bostall Wood. The report by Dr Rose provided physical descriptions of the German schools, the financial expenditure associated with them, sample timetables and perhaps, most importantly, their success. The latter was gauged by assessing the children's recovery, weight gain and suitability to return to mainstream education following

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[342] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council* (1907), p. 5.
[343] Broughton, p. 13.
[344] Kingsley and Dresslar, p. 133.
[345] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): report of the Education Committee of the Council submitting (i.) a Report by the Educational Adviser on experiments conducted in Germany in connection with Open-Air Schools, and (ii.) a Joint Report of the Medical Officer and the Executive Officer on the Open-Air School carried out in Bostall Wood between 22nd July and 19th October, 1907,* (1907).

attendance at an open-air school. Dr Rose had clearly gathered considerable information during his visits to Charlottenburg, and his report provides an indispensable guide to the history of the creation of open-air schools.

The Charlottenburg School was based in a large pine forest in the country and accommodated ninety-five children during its first term. Most of the children were anaemic, but there were also children suffering from minor forms of lung, heart and scrofulous diseases. Wherever possible, the children were taught and rested outside, although a number of basic wooden buildings provided shelter when necessary and accommodated the showers and baths that were regarded as 'a very important part in the life of the open-air school'.[346] The children were fed five small meals a day and had a two-hour rest after lunch each day.

The situation of the school was inspirational to developing the importance of nature and gardening in the curriculum of the open-air school; a trend that was to continue throughout the history of open-air schools. At Charlottenburg, the forest, 'affords large possibilities for walks and nature study…the whole plan and conception of the school enables the teachers to make an ally of nature in their great work of education'.[347] Each child at Charlottenberg was provided with an 'allotment' (Figures 92 and 93).[348]

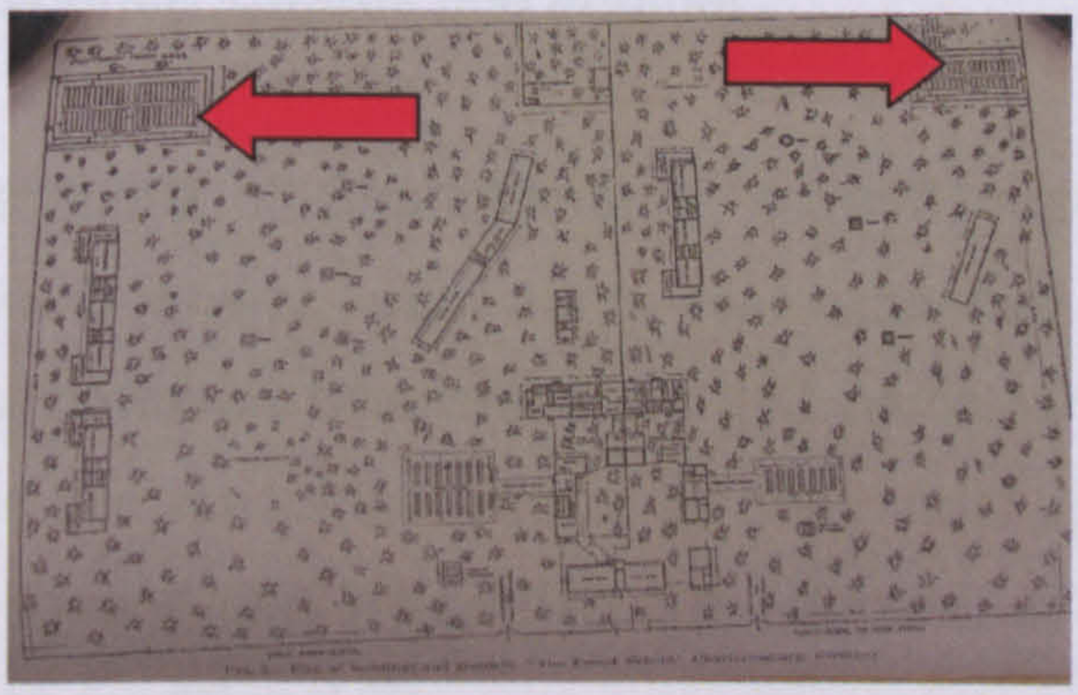

Figure 92: Plan of Charlottenburg Open-Air School (Source: Kingsley *Open Air Schools*, 1917). The Allotments are in the top right and left hand corners of the plan.

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[346] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 6.
[347] Kingsley and Dresslar, p. 11.
[348] Ibid., p. 9.

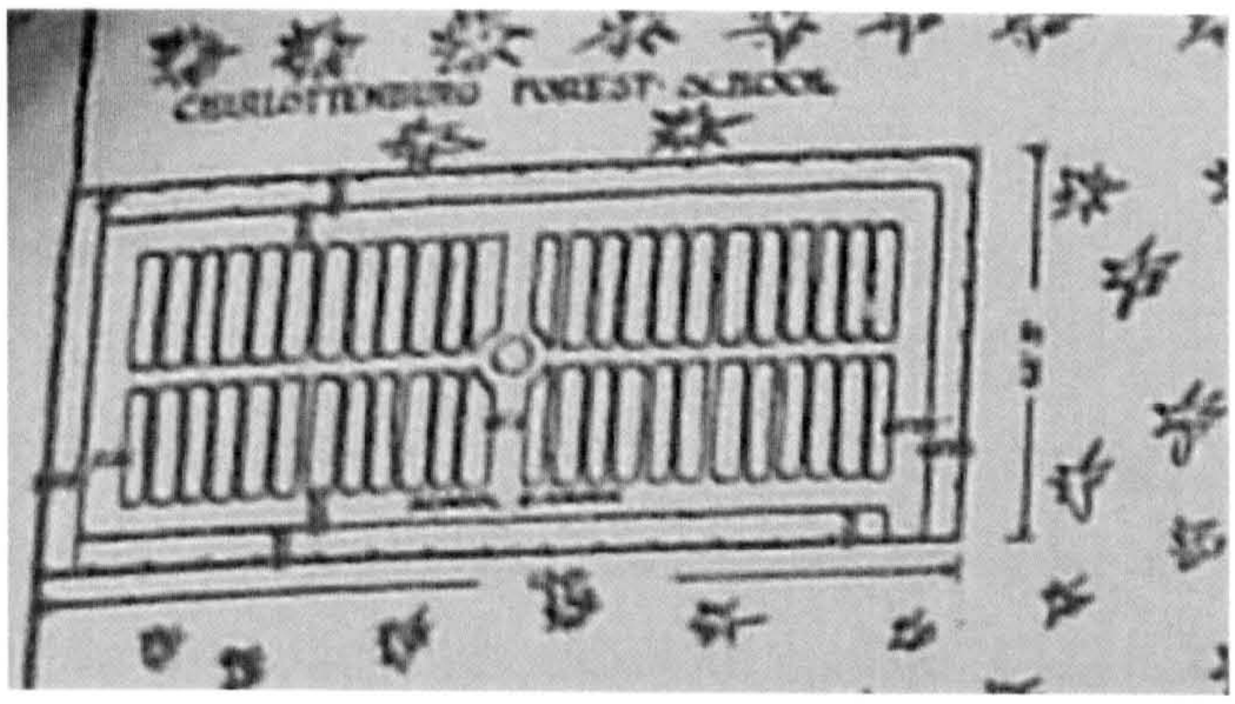

Figure 93: Detail of children's allotments at Charlottenburg Open-Air School (Source: Kingsley *Open Air Schools*, 1917)

The school was run as an experiment for three months in the first year, during which time the children's health, weight and growth were carefully monitored, along with their educational and moral development. At the end of the three month experiment, the majority of children had either improved or been cured. Their improvement was attributed to, 'the simplest methods',[349] namely fresh air, sunlight, baths, simple but regular food, rest and fewer hours of lessons. Interestingly, despite the decrease in lesson time, the majority of children were educationally equal with or beyond their peers when they returned to ordinary schools. Morally, the children's behaviour was also observed to have greatly improved, the reason for which was attributed to the community spirit of the school: 'The children were taught to regard themselves as members of a large family, and were trained to assist in the daily life of the community and to be helpful and considerate towards one another'.[350]

Following the success of Charlottenburg, several more schools were soon opened in Germany, with many more planned throughout the country. It was, however, Charlottenburg that particularly impressed Dr Rose, and it was this school that was to be 'the model upon which future experiments in London may be carried out, adapted, of course, to local, climatic and other conditions'.[351]

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[349] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 7.
[350] Ibid., p. 7.
[351] Ibid., p. 10.

4.3 England's First Open-Air School: Bostall Wood, London

Bostall Wood was the first open-air school 'experiment' run by the LCC in London during July, August and September of 1907, almost without doubt as a result of the enthusiasm with which Dr Rose reported his findings at Charlottenburg. It is clear that the opportunity an open-air school offered to London pupils was in high demand. The LCC approached the headmasters and headmistresses of fifty-one schools in the local area to nominate children whom they felt would benefit from attendance at an open-air school, and 272 children were put forward. However, the LCC faced the problem of finding a way of certifying the school and financing the scheme.

Although education had been compulsory for all children since the passing of the 1870 Elementary Education Act, it was clear that not all children could be educated at the same place and to the same standard. Provision had already been made for the education of deaf and blind children, and later the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899 created some provision for those children who fell outside the remit of standard education, but were neither deaf nor blind. It was under this Act that the LCC chose to certify their first open-air school. Although the LCC's main motivation for choosing to certify Bostall Wood under this Act was probably financial, as a school certified under the 1899 Act would receive a larger grant, certifying under this Act had the added advantage of allowing greater flexibility of the timetable and regulations restricting the number of pupils per class to twenty-five. Smaller classes and not being constricted to the standard elementary timetable would allow the open-air school teachers to develop teaching techniques that would revolutionise teaching methods in both the open-air school and mainstream education. Finances were further assisted by the collaboration of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, who offered to give over a suitable piece of land for the experiment in return for a pepper-corn rent. The land was in South London, and consisted of, 'a well-wooded enclosure of about twenty acres. A turfed space about

seventy yards in diameter, almost in the centre of the wood, was used for the school itself'.[352]

In July 1907, a staff of comprising of a doctor, nurse, headmistress, two assistant masters, two assistant mistresses, a cook, two helpers and a caretaker were accountable for the education and recovery of the hundred children[353] who had been selected by Medical Officers as being suitable for the 'experiment'. Throughout the 1907 LCC Report, the open-air school at Bostall Wood is referred to as 'an experiment'. An example of this can be found in the headmistress' report, which is divided into two simple sections; the object of the experiment and results. The headmistress identifies that the objective of the experiment 'is to ascertain how far an abundance of fresh air, good regular food and rest will benefit children who are below the normal standard and suffering from anaemia, heart trouble and incipient pulmonary diseases'.[354]

As with any experiment, the subject, in this instance the children, were carefully monitored through mental and physical tests and measurements. These were listed as:

(1) Height and Weight.
(1) Chest Expansion.
(2) Tests of Muscular Power.
(3) Indications of increased metabolism and improved nutrition, carriage, colour of mucous membrane, proportion of haemoglobin in the blood.
(4) Mental tests, motor and sensory reactions, modification of Binet's mental tests.
(5) Improved health, or, in other terms, disease cured.
(6) Improved subsequent attendance at the ordinary school.[355]

The conclusions of the experiment were summarised in the 1907 LCC Report by several sources,[356] each reinforcing the success of the

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[352] Ayres, Leonard, *Open-Air Schools* (Doubleday, 1911), pp. 31-32 and London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council, 1907*, p. 18
[353] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907 p. 15.
[354] Ibid., Headmistress' Report, p. 21.
[355] *Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education in Annual Report for 1912 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, pp. 259.

experiment. The general consensus was that 'every child benefited physically by attendance at the school; the general improvement was greater than could have been anticipated, and in some instances were remarkable'.[357] The success of the experiment was, like the earlier experiments in Germany, quite simply attributed to 'open-air school life'.[358]

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[356] Reports are provided by Dr A Eichholz (HM Inspector); Mr T H Jones (Council's District Inspector); Ms H M H Gibbs (Bostall Wood Headmistress); Local Managers (unnamed); Mr R Blair (Executive Officer) and Mr James Kerr (Medical Officer, Education).
[357] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 15.
[358] Ibid., quoting Dr Sears, one of the LCC's Local Medical Inspectors, p. 16.

4.4 The Open-Air School Curriculum and Nature

Although the entire open-air school experiment was revolutionary, it was to be the approach to educating the children that was to prove the most revolutionary of all. Pupils in standard schools had traditionally been seated inside throughout the school day and learnt by rote,[359] in part necessitated as a means of keeping discipline amongst the large number of pupils in each class. By contrast, the open-air school had smaller classes, 'the ratio of children to teachers was less than thirty at a time when classes in ordinary schools commonly exceeded sixty',[360] the result of which was that 'each child can be treated as an individual'.[361] Whilst the open-air school adhered to the subjects on the curriculum in the ordinary public elementary school, the school surroundings were utilised so that there was a 'strong impress of nature study'.[362]

The timetable illustrated in the 1907 report shows that as well as religious instruction, arithmetic, reading, composition, history, geography, sketching and singing, the children were also timetabled lessons in nature study and gardening, the latter being classified as 'Manual work'. The curriculum (Figure 94) was deliberately designed to encourage the weak children at the school to take part in physical activities that would engage and develop them mentally and physically:

> The pupils on admission were incapable of sustained mental and bodily effort and required a strong incentive to work. It was for this reason that prominence was given to educational work which called for bodily activity and encouraged resourcefulness and initiative.[363]

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[359] Hendrick, Harry, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 74.
[360] Jefferson, E F E, *The Story of England's First Open Air School* (privately published, 1957), p. 5.
[361] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 21, Headmistress' Report.
[362] Ibid., quote by Dr Eichholz (HM Inspector), p. 20.
[363] London County Council, *Open Air Schools 1908: Report of the Education Committee on the Open Air Schools at Birley House, Dulwich; Montpelier House, Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House, Woolwich*, p. 5.

APPENDIX VI.

Time Table.

Hours.	9.0 to 9.30	9.30 a.m. to 10.0 a.m.	10.0 a.m. to 10.45 a.m.	10.45 a.m. to 11.0 a.m.	11.0 a.m. to 11.45 a.m.	11.45 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.	12.30 to 1.0	1.0 p.m. to 3 p.m.	3.0 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.	3.15 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.	3.45 to 4.45 p.m.	4.45 p.m. to 5.15 p.m.	5.15 to 5.30.	5.30 p.m. to 6.0 p.m.
Time occupied.	30ms.	30 minutes.	45 minutes.	15 minutes.	45 minutes.	45 minutes.	30ms.	Two hours.	15 minutes.	30 minutes.	One hour.	30 minutes.	15ms.	30 minutes.
Monday	BREAKFAST	Registers marked and closed Religious instruction	Practical arithmetic Mensuration, etc.	Games	Nature study	Sketching and Written composition	DINNER	Rest	Drill	Silent reading	GIRLS: Manual work — Needlework or Knitting | BOYS: Manual work — Clay modelling	TEA	Prayers	Games
Tuesday					Reading	Breathing exercises and Singing				History and Geography (combined)	Manual work — Gardening and Laundry-work | Gardening and Scrubbing			
Wednesday					Nature study	Sketching and Painting				Telling stories and oral composition	Manual work — Basket-making			
Thursday					Reading	Breathing exercises and Singing				Recitation and elocution	Manual work. Needlework or knitting | Clay modelling			
Friday					Reading	Nature study				Composition, historical and geographical	Manual work — Gardening			
Saturday					General clearing up of camp	Recitation, Tableaux etc.				Dismissal				

Figure 94: Timetable for Bostall Wood School (Source: LCC Report 1907), illustrating the inclusion of 'Nature Study' and 'Gardening and Scrubbing'.

One of the few photographs taken of Bostall Wood (Figure 95) clearly illustrates that gardening was not merely theoretical, but was a physically active subject for both girls and boys.

Figure 95: Photograph of Children Gardening at Bostall Wood Open Air School 1907 (Source: LCC Bostall Wood File at LMA)

As with the school at Charlottenburg, the situation of Bostall Wood was an inspiration to the study of nature: 'the wild flowers and plants and the varieties of insect and bird life were an unfailing source of instruction and enjoyment'.[364] The 1907 LCC Report confirms that at least two of the five teaching staff had a special interest in nature. Mr Turner, Assistant Master, is credited in the report as being the Honoury Secretary of the Nature Study Union, and Miss Beer is described as having a 'special experience of nature study'.[365] Although nature and gardening were taught as part of the curriculum, there is evidence to suggest that nature was also utilised as a cross-curricula teaching device: 'this [teaching] has been carried out upon practical lines as far as possible',[366] and this was a trend that was set to continue and to be developed throughout the history of Britain's open-air schools.

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[364] London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 18.
[365] Ibid., p. 19.
[366] Ibid., p. 22.

4.5 Birley House, Dulwich; Montpelier House, Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House, Woolwich, 1908

The Bostall Wood open-air school experiment was deemed such a success that it was repeated the following year at three sites in London: Birley House in Dulwich; Montpelier House in Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House in Woolwich. The original London open-air school at Bostall Wood was not re-opened, possibly due to what was subsequently considered the unfavourable situation of the site,[367] but it appears that this school was simply transferred to Birley House. The 1908 school season was extended from the three months of 1907 to four-and-a-half months.

Once again the LCC published a report on the three schools.[368] Like the 1907 Report, the 1908 Report confirms that these open-air schools were again regarded as an experiment, albeit one that had been significantly developed. As in the 1907 Report, the children's height and weight in 1908 were carefully monitored, recorded, and reported upon. However, the children were now also photographed at the start and end of their stay at the school as a means of further recording their physical development and giving validity to the experiment. The following photographs are examples of those taken at Montpelier House in July and October 1908 of the same group of boys. That the boys were photographed in exactly the same places in three positions clearly illustrates not only the physical improvement of the pupils but also the concise scientific approach by which the LCC monitored them.

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[367] Reference is made to this in the London County Council, *Open Air School, Bostall Wood (Plumstead): Report of the Education Committee of the Council*, 1907, p. 22.
[368] *London County Council, Open Air Schools 1908: Report of the Education Committee on the Open Air Schools at Birley House, Dulwich; Montpelier House, Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House, Woolwich* (1909).

Figure 96: Fully-Clothed Group of Boys at Montpelier House, 3/7/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA)

Figure 97: Fully-Clothed Group of Boys at Montpelier House 3 months later on 12/10/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA). Note they grey division of the background wall that is used as an indicator of growth.

Figure 98: Shirtless Group of Boys at Montpelier House 3/7/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA)

Figure 99: Shirtless Group of Boys at Montpelier House 3 months later on 12/10/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA)

Figure 100: Shirtless Group of Boys (Rear View) at Montpelier House 3/7/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA)

Figure 101: Shirtless Group of Boys (Rear View) at Montpelier House 3 months later on 12/10/08 (Source: LCC Montpelier File, LMA)

4.6 Further Developments in the Use of Nature as an Educational Tool in the Open-Air School

As well as the records of the growth of the children being developed in the second year of the open-air schools experiment, so too was the use of nature in the education of the children. Whilst oblique references were made to utilising the natural surroundings of Bostall Wood in 1907 to educate the children, the 1908 Report provides clear evidence that the teachers now actively sought to use nature throughout the curriculum: 'every subject which could possibly be made practical has been taught in that way'.[369] In the headmistress' report for Birley House, Miss Beer, who had been an assistant schoolmistress at Bostall Wood with a particular interest in nature study the year before, cites many examples of the natural surroundings of the school being used as the basis for general curriculum subjects. Geography was taught through the physical re-creation of streams, history by encouraging the children to build caves, wig-wams, log-cabins, Norman keeps and pre-historic shelters (Figure 102) and occupying the same.[370]

Figure 102: Photograph of History Lesson - Cave Dwellers, Pre-Historic Times - Birley House, 1908 (Source: LCC Birley House File, LMA)

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[369] Ibid., p. 5.
[370] Ibid., Headmistress' Report for Birley House, p. 11.

The Montpelier House headmistress' report also highlights the school's use of nature as a cross-curricula subject and makes particular reference to its relevance to arithmetic:

> Arithmetic, when not purely mental, was mainly practical, trees were measured as to distances, circumference, diameters etc. : areas, small and large, were actually calculated.[371]

Again the photographs taken by the LCC give clear evidence of this being the case (Figure 103).

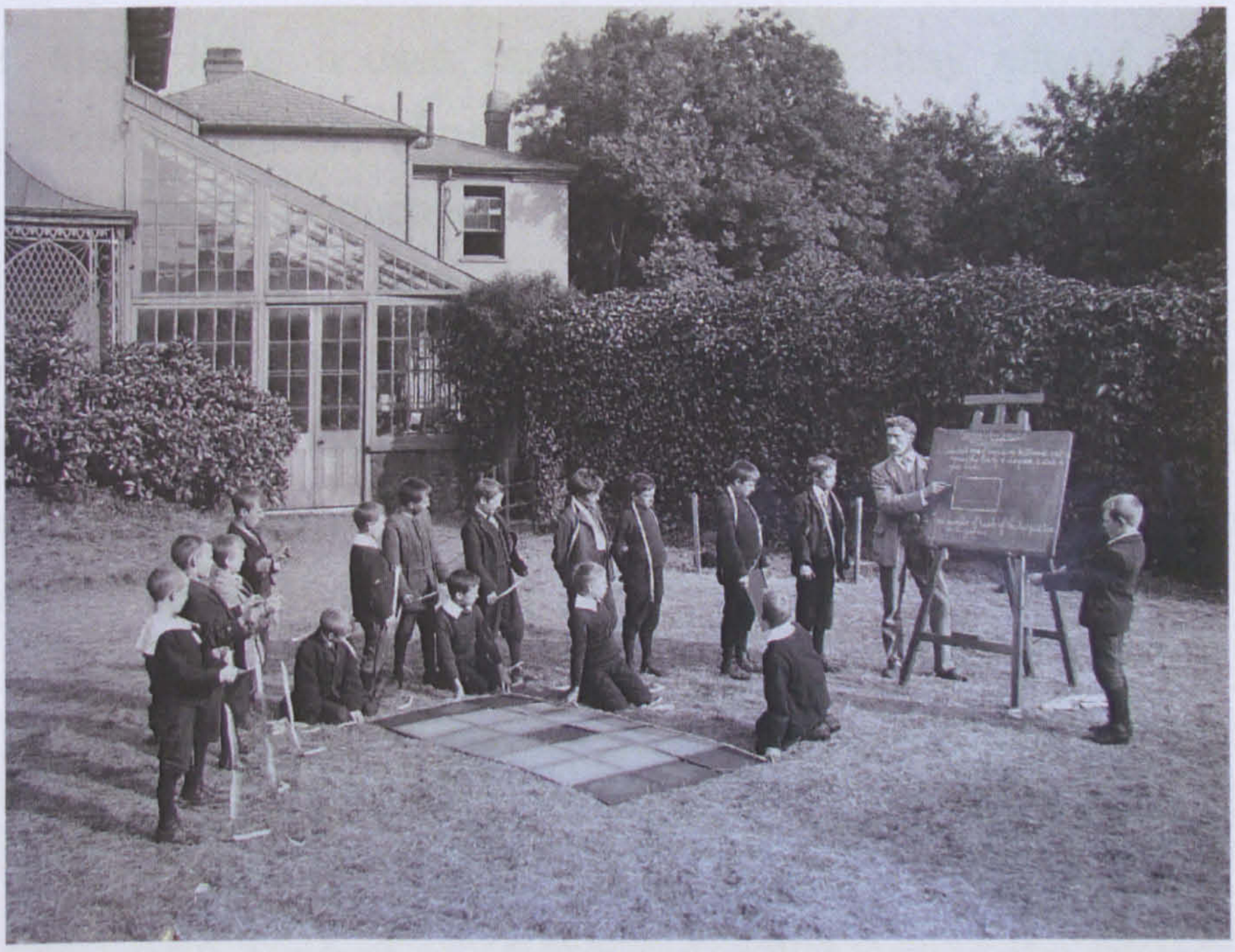

Figure 103: Arithmetic Lesson at Montpelier House, 1908 (Source: LCC Montpelier House File, LMA). The outside space is utilised to illustrate the mathematical formula for calculating area.

Looking at Figure 103, it is evident that the open-air school at Montpelier House was not situated in as remote an area as might be imagined. This illustrates one of the main problems the LCC faced in creating open-air schools, namely, finding suitable sites that were easily accessible to the London school children who needed them most. This problem was highlighted in the 1908 LCC Report which noted 'it is almost impossible to

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[371] Ibid., *Headmistress' Report for Montpelier House*, p. 12.

secure suitable sites'.[372] The site at Bostall Wood in 1907 had proved to be unsuitable for its purpose as it was situated on heavy clay soil with a northerly aspect without the bathing, sanitorial or cooking facilities that were deemed an important part of the children's physical treatment.

Both Birley House and Montpelier House were, as their names suggest, large houses with the benefit of a generous amount of outside space. The houses offered a solution to the problems of providing bathing and cooking facilities, whilst also offering the potential for shelter during particularly bad weather. Although not as remotely situated as Bostall Wood, these large houses, and the facilities they offered, still lent themselves to the study of nature and gardening that was at the core of the open-air school education: 'Nature study and the observation and description of natural objects at first hand have been insisted upon, even to the reduction of branches of formal education'.[373] At Montpelier House the glasshouse and the walled kitchen garden were utilised to allow the children to both observe nature and to engage in the physical exercise of gardening (Figures 104 and 105).

Figure 104: Botany Class at Montpelier House 3/7/08 (Source: LCC Files, LMA)

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[372] Ibid., p. 3.
[373] Ibid., p. 5.

Figure 105: Class Gardening at Montpelier House 3/7/08 (Source: LCC Files, LMA). The houses in the background give an indication of the urban area in which the school was situated.

Figures 104 and 105 also give a suggestion of the size and facilities offered at these large houses. Unfortunately such houses were invariably situated in affluent areas of London and not in the more deprived areas where they were most needed. They were also certainly not in accordance with the criteria established at Charlottenburg, which had been the original inspiration of the LCC. However, the third school that the LCC opened in 1908 did seem to fall in line with the original inspiration. It was felt that, 'the conditions at Charlottenburg were more closely approached at Shrewsbury House than at either of the other schools'.[374] This site, at the top of Shooter's Hill, comprised three-and-a-half acres of woodland and two-and-a-half acres of meadow. It had a considerable slope (Figure 106), which, despite proving problematic for the children to climb at the start of the school day, did afford them good exposure to both wind and sunshine.[375]

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[374] Ibid., p. 17.
[375] Ibid., p.14.

Figure 106: Gardening and Haymaking at Shrewsbury House, June 1908 (Source: LCC Shrewsbury House File, LMA), clearly illustrating the open aspect of the site.

There is evidence to suggest that Shrewsbury House was a deliberate attempt to recreate some of the conditions and designs of the original open-air school at Charlottenburg. Comparing a photograph of the Charlottenburg school (Figure 107) with a photograph of the site at Shrewsbury House (Figure 108), it is clear that there are many striking similarities in both the location and configuration of shelters.

Figure 107: Photograph of Charlottenburg Open Air School (Source: 1908 LCC Report)

Figure 108: Shrewsbury House Open Air School (Source: LCC Shrewsbury House Files, LMA), illustrating the similarity between this school and the Charlottenburg Open Air School.

Whilst clearly based upon Charlottenburg, the set up of Shrewsbury House also seems to follow the design of a model of an open-air school created by Dr Rose in 1907 (Figure 109). Although this forms part of the LCC's Birley House archive file, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that this model was created by Dr Rose based on his visits to the site at Charlottenburg and was used as an inspiration for the design of the site at Shrewsbury House.

Figure 109: Model Open Air School by Dr Rose, 1908 (Source: LCC Birley House Files at LMA), probably based upon Dr Rose's visits to Charlottenburg Open Air School.

Once again the 'experiments' at Birley House, Montepelier House and Shrewsbury House were deemed a success in the 1908 LCC Report.

The report reinforced that through utilising the benefits of the open-air way of life the children had improved both physically and mentally. The latter was achieved not only academically, but also psychologically. As with the first open-air experiment at Charlottenburg, it was found that the communal atmosphere of the open-air school improved the children morally:

> There is another factor of the school life in the open air which must not be overlooked, namely the growth of consideration and sympathy among pupils. Many opportunities arose for the inculcation of habits of kindliness and for pointing out the duties and responsibilities of members of the community as the children were taught to regard themselves. The effect of the teaching of civic responsibility was remarked upon by visitors to the school.[376]

The experiment in both the physical and mental development of the children utilising fresh air and nature was clearly eagerly watched by a number of outside bodies. The 1908 Report notes that the schools were open to visitors one afternoon a week, and 'a great number of persons interested in the work of education both at home and aboard, including a number of American teachers, were so admitted'.[377] With this in mind, it is interesting to note that it was in the winter of that year that America's first open-air school was opened in Providence (Rhode Island).[378] The experiment had also captured the interest of educationalists at home in the UK. Following on from these initial experiments in London, the movement spread to the provinces and open-air schools were opened in Bradford, Halifax and Norwich in 1908, followed by schools in other cities including Norwich, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, Barnsley, Kettering, Manchester and Liverpool. So successful were the 1908 'experiments' in London, that this was to be the last year that the LCC felt compelled to write a report analysing and justifying them. They had proved themselves viable and the open-air movement was to be developed in London and throughout the country.

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[376] London County Council, *Open Air Schools 1908: Report of the Education Committee on the Open Air Schools at Birley House, Dulwich; Montpelier House, Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House, Woolwich*, p. 6.
[377] Ibid., p. 5.
[378] Wilmot and Saul, p. 6.

As well as schools provided by the LCC in London, there were also a number of other open-air schools that were either provided by charities or privately funded. Three of the most interesting of these utilised the parks of London: The Regent's Park Open-Air School (1911-1929)[379]; The Kindergarten Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park (1914-1931) and the St James' Park Open-Air School (circa 1930's).[380]

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[379] *Open Air School Regents Park attached to the St Marylebone Dispensary for the Prevention of Consumption, Marylebone Road. Report for the Year ending December 1923*, p. 1.
[380] It has not been possible to confirm exact dates for the St James's Park Open Air School, although inscriptions in a photograph album for the school at the Westminster Archives are dated 1945.

4.7 The Regent's Park Open-Air School

Regent's Park Open-Air School, also known as 'The Bandstand School', was attached to the St Marylebone Dispensary for the Prevention of Consumption, and, as its nick-name suggests, was held on the bandstand in Regent's Park. It was created at the suggestion of Dr Hilliday Sutherland, Tuberculosis Officer for the Dispensary, as he had identified that there was no provision in the area for children excluded from elementary schools on the grounds of health. Utilising the park overcame the main problem of finding suitable outdoor sites in central London. Although the school was started as a summer experiment, its success resulted in the school being open throughout the year (Figure 110).

Figure 110: Regent's Park Open Air School (Source: *The Year Book of Open Air Schools, 1915)*, illustrating how lessons took place outside, regardless of the weather conditions.

There were initially only four pupils enrolled at the school when it first opened in 1911, but the number of pupils rose quickly and had risen to fifty-nine by the following year.[381] The majority of the children at the

[381] Sutherland, H, 'The Regents Park Tuberculosis School', in Kelynack, p.301.

school were selected from those attending the Dispensary. Legally they had to be officially excluded from their general elementary education on the grounds of health before they were allowed to attend the open-air school. The children used the space around the bandstand on fine days, retreating to the bandstand, which was sometimes protected with a canvas screen, during bad weather (Figure 111).

CHILDREN AT WORK IN REGENT'S PARK IN FRONT OF THE BANDSTAND.

Figure 111: Regent's Park Open Air School (Source: *The Year Book of Open Air Schools, 1915)*, illustrating the canvas screens used to offer some protection during bad weather.

It may be assumed that the opportunities for gardening and nature study for children educated in a public park were more limited than those for children based in a more rural location. A timetable for the school confirms that gardening was not part of the curriculum, but that the children were scheduled, 'Observation lessons on things to be seen in the park'. [382] Although clearly successful, the school was closed in 1929, the reason given being that 'the School has served its purpose and has, by its very success, reduced the need to meet which it was established in 1911'.[383]

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[382] Ibid., p.303.
[383] *Open Air School Regent's Park attached to the St Marylebone Dispensary for the Prevention of Consumption, Marylebone Road. Report for the Year ending December 1929*, p. 1.

4.8 The Open-Air School at the Botanical Gardens: A Fee-Paying School

There was a second open-air school held in Regent's Park at this time; the Open-Air School at the Botanical Gardens. This school is of particular interest as it is an example of a fee-paying open-air school created for healthy middle and upper-class children.[384] Thus far all of the schools identified were created by the LCC or charities, and were aimed at children who were suffering from diseases that were often associated with their poor living conditions. This is reinforced in the 1908 LCC Report, which states: 'in a large number of such cases the only real "defect" is insufficient feeding and clothing, unhealthy home conditions, and want of sleep'.[385] It is unlikely that children from middle and upper-class families would have suffered from these 'defects', and indeed the pupils at the Botanical Gardens School were described as 'normal, healthy little people'.[386] However, as was pointed out in an article written in 1915,

> The question arose, if fresh air did such wonderful things for delicate children, what would it not do for healthy children. Children are like little forests blazing with energy out of doors; indoors they smoulder and grow sleepy. Out-of-door children are awake, alive and alert the whole time; indoor children are apt to be only half alive and half awake, and so open-air schools have been started in London for healthy children whose parents can pay...The object of these schools is to teach children under the very best conditions for physical and mental development.[387]

The school was situated within the grounds of the Botanical Gardens, which were run by the Royal Botanic Society and based in the inner circle of Regent's Park. The Society was created in 1839 to further 'the promotion of Botany and its application to Medicine, Arts and Manufacturers, and also for the formation of extensive Botanical and

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[384] Similar fee-paying open-air schools were located at Greenaway Gardens, Hampstead and Alexandra Drive, St John's Wood (Ref: Mrs J Cunning, 'The Need for Open Air Schools for Children of the Upper and Middle Classes' pp. 65-66 in Kelynack, p. 66).
[385] London County Council, *Open Air Schools 1908: Report of the Education Committee on the Open Air Schools at Birley House, Dulwich; Montpelier House, Upper Holloway and Shrewsbury House, Woolwich*, p. 2.
[386] Nuth, Margaret, 'The Botanical Gardens Open Air School', Kelynack, p. 306.
[387] Ibid., p. 66.

Ornamental Gardens within the immediate vicinity of the Metropolis'.[388] Since its formation, the Society had been involved with educational projects such as opening the grounds free of charge to teachers and students, as well as offering free lectures and information and material to those investigating or utilising plant products.[389] Given the Society's links with education, it is not surprising that a school was opened in 1913 for children of the Fellows of the Botanical Gardens. The school was to continue for over fifteen years, only to be closed in 1931 when the government decided not to renew the Society's lease in the grounds of Regent's Park. The Botanical Gardens School was started some two years after the Regent's Park Open-Air School was established. It seems likely that members of the Botanical Gardens may have seen the Regent's Park Open-Air School children and their development and this was inspirational in creating a similar school for the benefit of children of Fellows of the Royal Botanic Society.

An undated prospectus[390] for the school contains a list of some of the parents of pupils who attended the school (Figure 112).

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[388] Charter for the Royal Botanic Society, 1840 located in the *Royal Botanic Society, Regent's Park* file at Westminster Archives.
[389] 'Information Required by Special Committee' – undated (circa 1920s?) typed sheet ref: 12/35 in *Royal Botanic Society, Regent's Park* file at Westminster Archives, p. 1.
[390] Located in the *Royal Botanic Society, Regent's Park* file at Westminster Archives.

Reference is kindly permitted to the following parents of present and past pupils.

Captain Herbert and Lady Cynthia Asquith, 8 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

Baroness Beaumont, 15 Manchester Square, W. 1.

Sir Maurice Bonham Carter, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., and Lady Bonham Carter, 24 Hyde Park Gardens, W. 2.

C. C. Choyce, Esq., C.M.G., F.R.C.S., and Mrs Choyce, 36 Bickenhall Mansions, W. 1.

Harold Craxton, Esq., Professor Royal Academy of Music, and Mrs. Craxton, 8 Grove End Road, N.W. 8.

Joseph Cunning, Esq., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Cunning, M.B., 3 Upper Wimpole Street, W. 1.

Clayton Greene, Esq., M.B., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Clayton Greene, 38 Harewood House, Hanover Square, W. 1.

J. Prescott Hedley, Esq., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., and Mrs Hedley, 65 Harley Street, W. 1.

The Hon. Bernard Fitzalan Howard, 15 Manchester Square, W. 1.

Robert Hutchison, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.P., and Mrs. Hutchison, 32 Devonshire Place, W. 1.

R. C. Jewesbury, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.P., and Mrs Jewesbury, 5 Wimpole Street, W. 1.

Frank Kidd, Esq., M.A., M.Ch., and Mrs. Kidd, 55 Harley Street, W. 1.

Lambert Lack, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Lack, 16 Devonshire Place, W. 1.

Hugh Lett, Esq., M.B., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Lett, 8 Lower Berkeley Street, W. 1.

Ernest Graham Little, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.P., and Mrs. Graham Little, 40 Wimpole Street, W. 1

Lady Lucas, 22 Sussex Square, W. 2.

Sidney Martin, Esq., M.D., F.R.S., and Mrs. Sidney Martin, 51 Wimpole Street, W. 1.

C. Max Page, Esq., D.S.O., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Page, 134 Harley Street, W. 1.

Leslie Paton, Esq., M.B., F.R.C.S., and Mrs Leslie Paton, 29 Harley Street, W. 1.

Norman Patterson, Esq., F.R.C.S., and Mrs. Patterson, 24 Park Crescent, Portland Place, W. 1.

G. Ramsay Phillips, Esq., M.R.C.S., and Mrs. Phillips, 20 Ulster Place, Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

Robert Riggall, Esq., L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S., and Mrs. Riggall, 31 Wimpole Street, W. 1.

The Viscount and Viscountess St Davids, 3 Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, S.W.

The Viscount and Viscountess Wolmer, 3 Chester Gate, Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

Sir Henry Wood and Lady Wood, 4 Elsworthy Road, Hampstead, N.W. 3.

Figure 112: Page from Botanical Gardens Open-Air School Prospectus (undated). (Source: Westminster Archives)

As would be expected of a fee-paying school in a prosperous area of London, there were a number of titled parents. However, what is of particular interest is that the vast majority of the parents were fellows of either the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) or the Royal College of Physicians (FRCP). This is perhaps not so surprising given the proximity of the school to Harley Street, the heart of London's medical profession, and the links between the Botanical Gardens and medicine. However, this offers evidence that those with a medical background, who were undoubtedly aware of the health benefits associated at this time with

fresh air, were keen to enrol their children into a school that was, 'established to promote the health of the children by every possible means'.[391] An article written by the principal of the Botanical Gardens Open-Air School further reinforces this suggestion,

> Their parents are all strong believers in the efficacy of fresh air as a preventive of disease, and as a means of promoting a vigorous constitution and they have welcomed the opportunity for getting the beginnings of a school education for their children in such a place and under such conditions.[392]

The Botanical Gardens Open-Air School marks a number of important transitions in the history of open-air schools in London. This school was a fee-paying school for middle and upper-class children that adopted the open-air methods formerly introduced by the LCC. The objective of the school was not, as had hitherto been the case, to cure the children, but rather the, 'unconsciously building up the "fresh-air habit," which will help to give them not only healthy, vigorous bodies, but also a simple, natural outlook on life'.[393] This subtle shift in the perception of the benefits of open-air education may account for the different interpretations of the inspiration for open-air education by two of the few modern historians who have published on the subject of open-air schools: Marjorie Cruickshank and Linda Bryder. Writing in 1992, Linda Bryder argued that the open-air movement 'harked back to a sentimental pre-industrial Golden Age',[394] and was not, as had been put forward in Cruickshank's earlier paper in 1977,[395] representative of 'the 'progressive' public health framework of the early twentieth century'.[396] Bryder claims in her article that she challenges Cruickshank's interpretation that open-air schools were 'progressive'. Unfortunately Bryder's paper is both poorly argued and referenced, but she does succeed in raising an important point. If

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[391] Nuth, Margaret, 'The Botanical Gardens Open Air School', in Kelynack, p. 306.
[392] Nuth, Margaret E, 'An Account of the Open-Air School Held in the Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park, London', *The Child,* Volume 4 (October 1913- September 1914), p. 441.
[393] Nuth, Margaret, 'The Botanical Gardens Open Air School', in Kelynack, p. 308.
[394] Bryder, Linda, 'Wonderlands of Buttercup, Clover and Daisies: Tuberculosis and the open-air school movement in Britain, 1907-39', *In the Name of the Child: Health and Welfare, 1880-1940* (Routledge, 1992), pp. 72-95.1992), p. 72.
[395] Cruickshank, Marjorie, 'The Open-Air School Movement in English Education', *Padedagogica Historica* (1977), p. 63.
[396] Bryder, p. 72.

research on open-air schools was limited to just, for example, the Botanical Gardens Open-Air School, it would be reasonable to assume that open-air schools did, as Bryder argues, hark back to a 'sentimental pre-industrial age'. However, more extensive research on the subject confirms that whilst the attitude towards open-air education certainly experienced a perceptible shift in the decade after its initial creation, the original motivation for its creation was clearly, as Marjorie Cruickshank argued, 'progressive'. A more accurate assessment of the development of open-air schools by Bryder could have acknowledged that the open-air school began as a 'progressive' exercise but that it then developed into a 'sentimental ' movement.

There is certainly much to suggest that until the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century, the major inspiration behind open-air schools was preventative medicine. An article in *The Child* (1912-1913) states that, 'the open-air life is now firmly established on a scientific basis'.[397] The growing understanding of how tuberculosis was spread and the benefits of fresh air and sunlight on health would ensure that the main role of open-air schools continued to be preventative. However, this period also marks the beginning of references to the benefits of an open-air education taking on a more 'romantic' slant, particularly through comparisons made with earlier historical examples of open-air education. The 1912 Report for the Board of Education appears to be the first to make such a reference:

> Although the idea of the open-air school originated in its present form at Charlottenburg, near Berlin, in 1904, it has its roots far back in the past. Open-air education was practised by the Greeks and Romans, was commended by the educationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – Locke, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi.[398]

This notion is reinforced two years later in 1914 by Hugh Boughton in *The Open Air School.* The introduction to his book does not, as perhaps might be anticipated, make reference to the medical influences and

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[397] Anon, 'Open-Air Babies', *The Child*, Volume 3 (October 1912-September 1913), p. 778.
[398] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1912 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, p. 256.

benefits of open-air schools, but instead begins by giving a brief, romantic history of outdoor education. He provides two quotes from the educational reformists John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) both reinforcing the romantic notion of allowing nature to tutor children:

> As far as possible men are to be taught to become wise not by books, but by heavens, the earth, oaks and beeches; that is, they must learn to know and examine other things themselves and not the testimony and observations of others about the things. [Comenius]
>
> Lead your child out unto Nature. Tutor him on the hilltop and in the valleys. There he will listen better, and the sense of freedom will give him more strength to overcome difficulties. But in these hours of freedom let him be taught by Nature rather than you. Should a bird sing or insect hum on the leaf, at once stop talking. Birds and insects are teaching him; you may be silent. [Pestalozzi] [399]

The Botanical Gardens Open-Air School was opened in the same year that Broughton's *The Open Air School* was published, and it is surely no coincidence that this school illustrates the clear shift in the Edwardian psyche from regarding open-air schools as a form of medical treatment to seeing them as an opportunity to re-create a romantic outdoors childhood experience for some – in this instance middle and upper-class - children. A description by the headmistress of the grounds of the Botanical Gardens School further reinforces this notion:

> The space and the beautiful surroundings in the Gardens all make for happiness too. There is no feeling of being penned in between four walls. The only roof is the sky, seen through a tracery of branches, and the vistas of grass and trees and shining water are restful and pleasant to the eye. Robins and sparrows come to share in the children's lunch, and hop round the tables where lessons are going on; birds chirp in the trees overhead, and birds and children together seem to belong to one large, friendly family.[400]

For the first time, it would appear that nature study in an open-air school was not used exclusively as a means of curing un-well children, but as a conduit for providing children with a romantic education. The children at

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[399] Broughton, pp. 11-12.
[400] Nuth, Margaret E, 'An Account of the Open-Air School Held in the Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park, London', pp. 440-441.

the Botanical Gardens had their own hives of bees, as well as school garden plots and clearly made full use of their botanical surroundings: 'they [the pupils] readily learn the names and appearance of most of the trees'.[401] The children at the school were healthy and well fed, and nature was not utilised as a cure for their illnesses, but rather as an interactive part of their education (Figure 122).

A NATURE LESSON IN THE OPEN: PICKING UP LEAVES.

Figure 113: Pupils at the Botanical Society Open Air School (Source: *Open School Year Book,* p. 306) depicting healthy, middle-class children utilising nature for their education rather than their health.

[401] Nuth, Margaret, 'The Botanical Gardens Open Air School', in Kelynack, p. 307.

4.9 St James' Park Open-Air School

The romantic notion of children enjoying an open-air life is also evident in photographs of pupils at the St James' Park Open-Air School (Figure 114). The headmistress' hand-written caption accompanying Figure 123 reads, 'A Fairy dance under the shadow of a 300 year old Elm tree. Note Buckingham Palace and Victoria Memorial in background'.[402]

Figure 114: Children from St James' Park Open-Air School (Source: Westminster Archives)

This photograph seems literally to illustrate the words from a commemorative hand-book on London's open-air schools: 'For children who have lived all their lives in crowded and possibly sordid districts it is a new and pleasant experience to spend their school hours among trees and flowers'.[403]

Unfortunately there is very little archival or reference material to the open-air school based at St James' Park. It is not listed by the LCC, and so it must be assumed that this was either a private fee-paying school, or one

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[402] *St James' Park Open Air School* file at Westminster Archives.
[403] London County Council, *London's Open-Air Schools*, p. 17.

provided by charity. However, a photograph album for this school has been sourced that was compiled by the headmistress of the school in the mid-1930s and this includes a number of photographs and press cuttings that give some insight into the school.[404] The photographs are taken throughout the year and from these it is possible to establish that the curriculum included geography, music, exercise, arithmetic, reading, drawing, needlework, nature study and the obligatory two-hour rest period. Like the open-air school at Regent's Park, there is no evidence to suggest that the children at St James' Park Open-Air School had the opportunity for practical gardening lessons. However, the album does contain a copy of a report from the headmistress's training college which confirms that Mary Kathleen Walsh, like so many other teachers involved in the open-air school movement, had a particular interest in nature: 'Her special study had been Botany, and extension of the college course in Nature Study'.[405]

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[404] *St James' Park Open Air School* file at Westminster Archives.
[405] Ibid.

4.10 The Development of Open-Air Schools

In 1911 it was reported that: 'it is now recognized that the [open-air school] movement is past the experimental stage and is to be reckoned with as an established feature of educational practice'.[406] Given the positive reaction to the open-air school movement, it is somewhat surprising that its growth was initially so slow. The 1915 *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education* notes that: 'it is rather remarkable that there should be in existence only a dozen [in Britain] open-air schools providing for a thousand children...The time has surely come for a substantial advance in the open-air method of education, the advantages of which were established ten years ago'.[407]

There appear to have been two main reasons for the initial slow growth in establishing open-air schools in England. The first was the difficulty in convincing working-class parents that fresh air and sunlight were beneficial to their children's health, as this was 'still the era of shut windows, curtains drawn against the sun, and dread of draughts...some [parents] guarded the suggestion that the children should have an outdoor life as a way of telling them that some incurable illness was suspected, others objected that their children would become ill if put into a class of delicate children'.[408]

Although the open-air experiments were deemed a great success - 'the remarkable part of it is that there have been no failures at all'[409] - the concept of treating diseased children outside was initially clearly met by some with scepticism and cynicism: 'When the idea was first mooted of carrying out the open-air treatment of tuberculosis in this country, with its much abused climate, it was laughed to scorn'.[410]

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[406] Ayres, p. 8.
[407] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1915 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, p. 101.
[408] Newcombe, E S, 'An Open-air Class', *The Child Under Eight at School*, ed Sergeant, Irene (Gresham, 1938), p. 199.
[409] Broughton, p. 18.
[410] Behnke, Kate Emil, 'The Sun and Air Cure for Delicate and Nervous Children', *The Child*, Volume 4 (October 1913-September 1914), p. 630.

The cost of providing open-air education was also regarded as being prohibitive to its development. Educating a child at an open-air school was 'more than double the cost per head of maintaining a child at an elementary school'.[411] This was due to the higher staff-to-pupil ratio, the necessity of having to provide on-site facilities and having to finance the provision of meals and transport for the children attending. Not surprisingly the *Annual Reports of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education* acknowledged that the costs of providing open-air education were deterring some Local Education Authorities from, 'embarking on a similar enterprise'.[412] The government were keen to convince LEAs that money spent on open-air facilities would, in the long run, prove a saving:

> It must be borne in mind that, if an incipient disease can be cured by a stay of some months[413] at an open-air school, the result may be the saving of a good deal of expenditure in the way of sanatorium or hospital treatment in later years. The open-air schools have undoubtedly effected [sic] economy in saving many boys and girls from becoming permanently unfit.[414]

London had certainly realised the long-term benefits of open-air education, and was at the cutting edge of the movement, despite the fact that it was probably one of the most difficult areas in the country in which to find suitable sites.[415] Their pro-active participation in creating open-air schools was noted by educationalists: 'We congratulate the London County Council upon their forward policy in this [the provision of open-air schools] respect'.[416] The LCC published an annual education reference volume: *The LCC Education Services Particulars.* It was not until 1915 that the LCC's open-air schools in London were given their own section in this book, but nonetheless it gives an insight into the momentum that the movement gained in London. Unfortunately the number of open-air schools and their pupils are not recorded after 1937, an act possibly due

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[411] London County Council, *London's Open-Air Schools* (circa 1928), p. 13.
[412] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1927 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, p. 149.
[413] The average stay for a pupil at an open-air school was six to twelve months (Broughton, pp. 42-43).
[414] London County Council, *London's Open-Air Schools*, p. 13.
[415] Rose, Frederick, 'The National Importance of Outdoor Schools', *British Journal of Tuberculosis,* Vlm 3, July 1909, p. 181.
[416] Anon, 'Open Air Schools', *Journal of Education,* July 1909, p. 456.

to the onset of war, which also marked the decline in the number of open-air schools. The two graphs (Figures 115 and 116) illustrate the growth of both the number of open-air schools in London and the number of pupils who attended them.

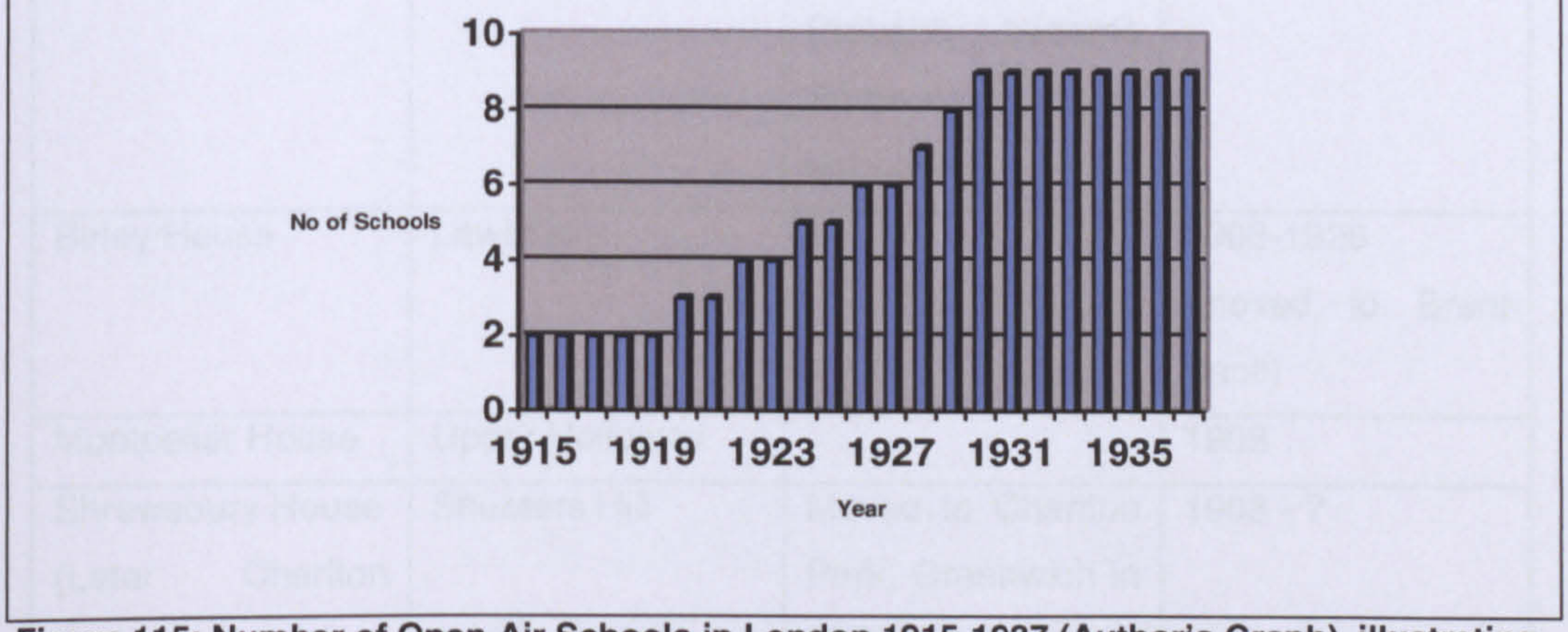

Figure 115: Number of Open-Air Schools in London 1915-1937 (Author's Graph), illustrating the increase in schools following World War I.

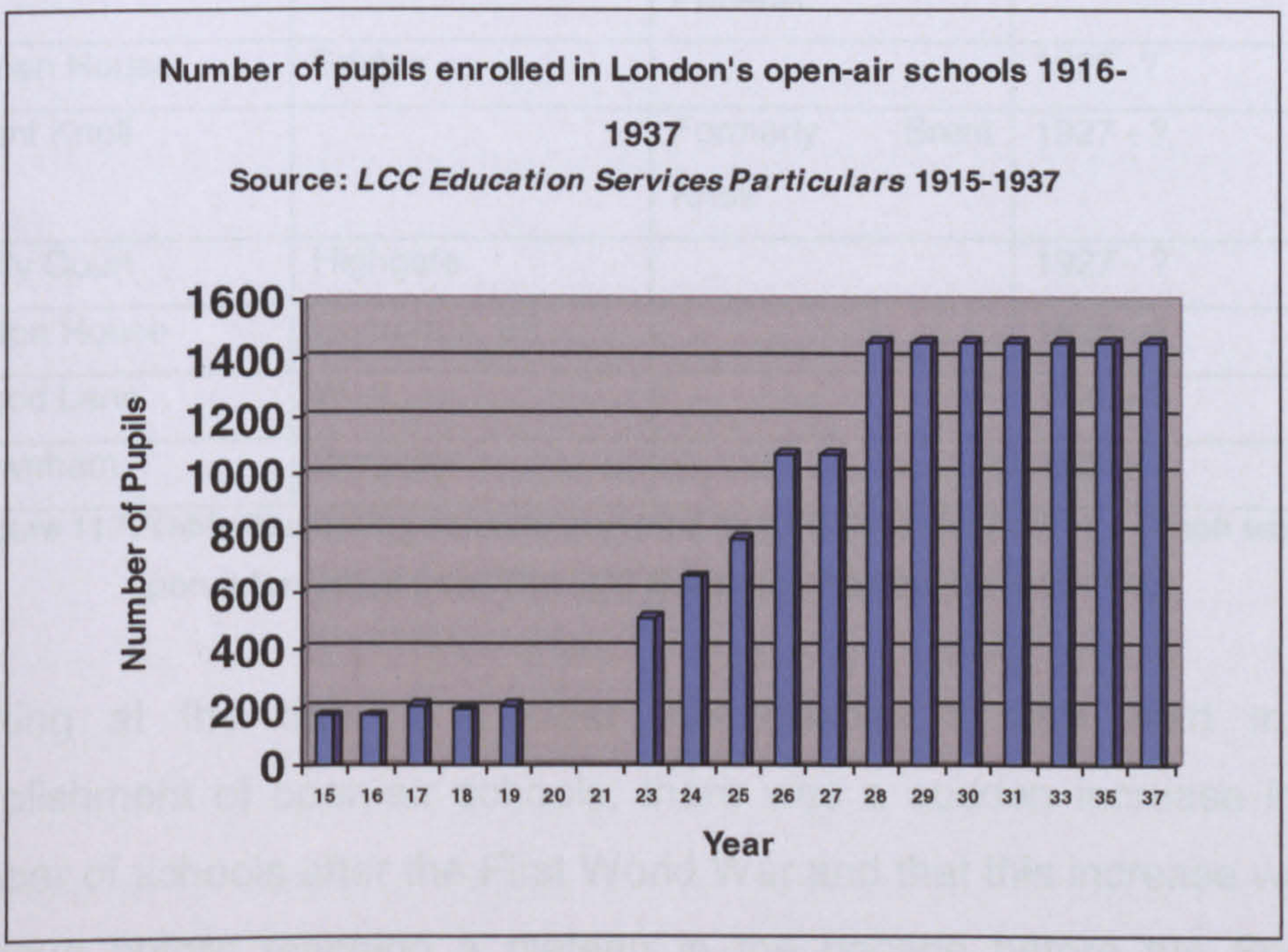

Figure 116: Number of children enrolled in London's Open Air Schools 1916-1937 (Author's Graph)

The LCC Education Services Particulars published annually also provided detailed information regarding the name, locations and dates of the schools provided by the LCC (Figure 117).

Name of School	***Location***	***Notes***	***Dates***
(Bostall Wood)		(not listed in LCC book but included for reference. Probably became Shrewsbury House School)	1907
Birley House	Lewisham		1908-1926 (moved to Brent Knoll)
Montpelier House	Upper Holloway		1908
Shrewsbury House (Later Charlton Park)	Shooters Hill	Moved to Charlton Park, Greenwich in 1929	1908 - ?
Stowey House	Clapham		1920 - ?
Bow and Bromley	Bow Road, E3	May also have been known as Phoenix	1922 - ?
Aspen House	Brixton		1925 -?
Brent Knoll		Formerly Brent Knoll	1927 - ?
Holly Court	Highgate		1927 - ?
Upton House	Homerton, E9		1928 - ?
Wood Lane	W12		1929 - ?
Downham	Bromley		1930 - ?

Figure 117: Table illustrating schools provided by LCC (Source: Author's Graph based upon information from *The LCC Education Particulars* 1915-1940)

Looking at the data it is clear that despite a slow start in the establishment of open-air schools, there was a sudden increase in the number of schools after the First World War and that this increase was to continue before reaching a plateau in the decade before the Second World War. A comparison of the total number of open-air schools in

England as compared with the total number in London (Figure 118) illustrates that the growth pattern was consistent throughout the nation.

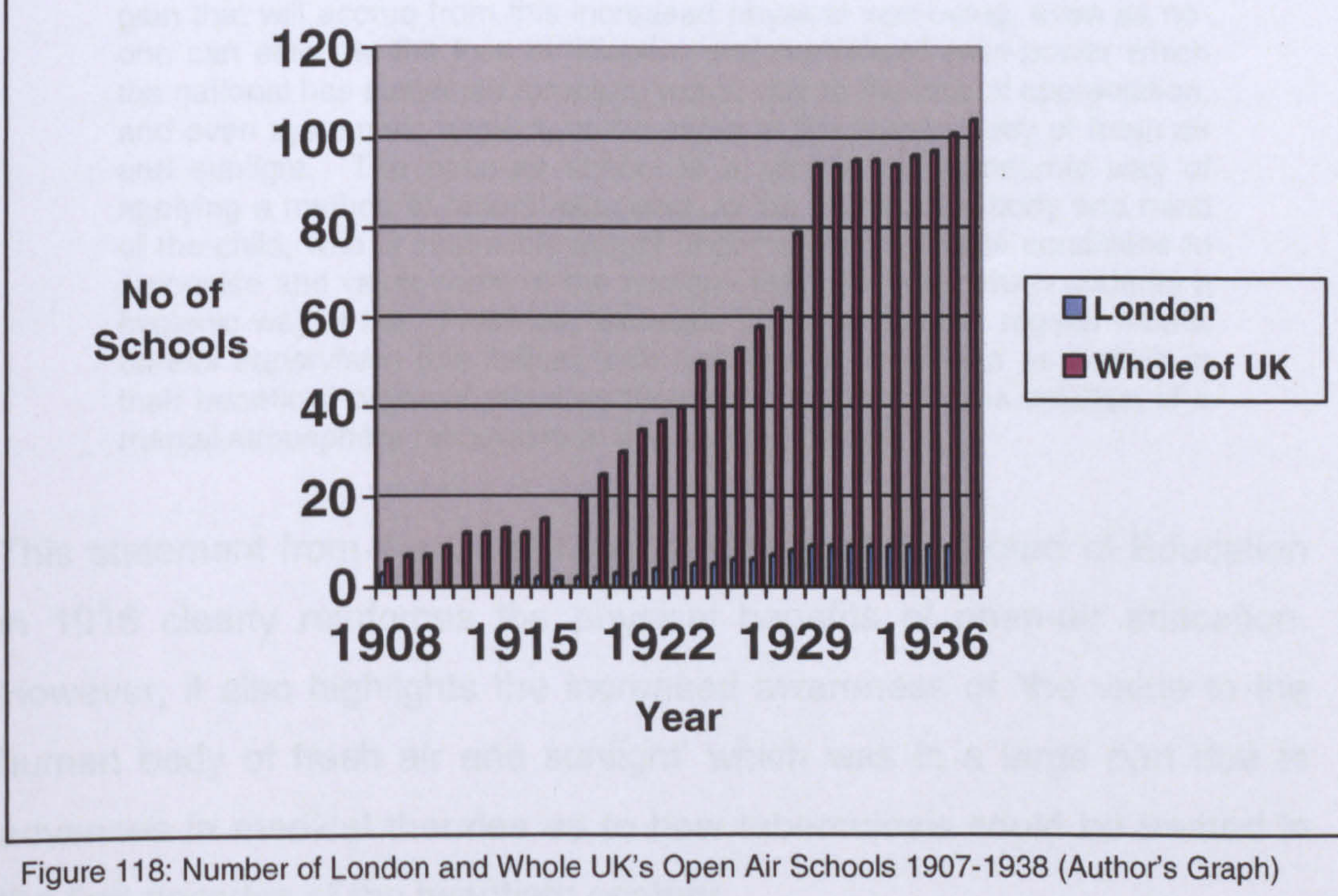

Figure 118: Number of London and Whole UK's Open Air Schools 1907-1938 (Author's Graph)

The slow growth of open-air schools in the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century can predictably be attributed to World War I. The *1915 Chief Medical Officer's Report to the Board of Education* noted:

> Several Authorities have had under their immediate consideration the question of the provision of Open-air Schools, and schemes have been adopted for their establishment. The fulfilment of the scheme has, however, had to be suspended owing to the restrictions imposed by the Treasury on capital expenditure in consequence of the War.[417]

Ironically, the war which attributed to the delayed development of open-air schools was also responsible for the 'boom' in such schools afterwards. It was noted that soldiers in the war, who spent much of their time outside and received regular meals, improved physically and that the

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[417] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1915 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education,* p. 101.

open-air school was a potential means of re-creating these benefits for children:

> During the past three years the nation has had a valuable object lesson of the benefits to be derived from an open-air life. Thousands of men who have been withdrawn from the urban areas of the country to undergo camp training in the Army have manifested an obvious and substantial improvement in their physical condition. No one can measure the national gain that will accrue from this increased physical well-being, even as no-one can estimate the loss in effective and devitalised man-power which the national has sustained for many years, due to the lack of appreciation, and even systematic neglect, of the value to the human body of fresh air and sunlight. The open-air school is a simple and economic way of applying a method of natural education to the susceptible body and mind of the child, who is insensibly taught under such favourable conditions to recognise and value some of the fundamental principles which underlie a hygienic way of life. *Fresh air, exercise, cleanliness, rest, regular meals, careful supervision* [his italics] form a series of conditions as certain in their beneficial physical effect as they are conducive to the creation of a mental atmosphere favourable to the opening mind.[418]

This statement from the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education in 1916 clearly reinforces the physical benefits of open-air education. However, it also highlights the increased awareness of 'the value to the human body of fresh air and sunlight' which was in a large part due to advances in medical theories as to how tuberculosis could be treated in the first decades of the twentieth century.

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[418] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1916 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, p. 103.

4.11 Tuberculosis and the Open-Air School

In 1915 tuberculosis was described as 'the most deadly scourge of modern civilisation'.[419] This disease, that attacked the lungs, glands and bones, thrived in the densely populated, unsanitary slums that were so common in London and other British cities. School medicals and advances in tuberculosis testing had revealed a new theory that: 'tuberculosis, far from being, as was thought, chiefly a disease of adult life, is intimately associated with childhood'.[420] During the second decade of the twentieth century, it was believed that children could be infected with tuberculosis without necessarily showing the full signs associated with the disease. These 'pre-tuberculous' children were identified as sharing certain characteristics such as being underweight, having stunted growth, and being anaemic. It now appeared that the ailments of the original 'backward' pupils for whom the early open-air schools were created, were in fact symptoms of pre-tuberculosis. It is interesting to note that the seven to ten per cent of school-children who were regarded as being 'backward' at the start of the century corresponded almost exactly with the percentage of 'pre-tuberculous' children identified a decade later. It was estimated that approximately ten per cent of all school children were 'pre-tuberculous' in the first two decades of the twentieth century,[421] which amounted to some 600,000 children in 1916.[422]

Medical advances had identified that: 'sunlight, fresh air, good food, rest and properly regulated exercise in the fresh air are the chief curative factors in dealing with pulmonary tuberculosis'.[423] If these could be used to aid the recovery of those suffering from tuberculosis in hospitals, it is not surprising that the same techniques were also utilised as a method of

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[419] Fraser, Mark S, 'The Control of Tuberculosis in Children', *The Child,* Volume 5 (October 1914-September 1915), pp. 128-132.
[420] Williamson, David J, 'An Open-Air School for London Children', *The Child,* Volume 3 (October 1912-September 1913), p. 443.
[421] Bryder, quoting T N Kelynack (ed.) *Defective Children* (1915), p. 356.
[422] Bryder, quoting *The Health of the School Child. Report by the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1916* (1917), p. 103.
[423] Fraser, p. 132.

treating less advanced cases of tuberculosis in school children. If tuberculosis was to be controlled in England, it was evident that the children needed to be treated. Open-air schools, that had, since their creation, used the same formula now recognised to treat tuberculosis, represented the possible solution. In 1908 there were three open-air schools in Britain; by 1937 there were 155.[424]

Following World War I, sunlight was regarded as a suitable treatment for tuberculosis, and this new development was to be reflected in the open-air school: 'In recent years much interest has been taken in open-air education, and, since the Great War, the scientific study of the value of sunlight as a healing agent has still further directed attention to its advantages and possibilities'.[425]

It was acknowledged that sunlight treatment was difficult to provide in the English climate, but it was felt that it could be beneficially utilised in the south of England during the summer. Stowey House, created by the LCC in the 1920s, was an example of an open-air school 'conducted on lines which enable all the children to receive sunlight treatment'.[426] Boys were issued with shorts, whilst the girls were provided with a '"cami-knicker" type of garment with the back cut away to the waist'.[427] Sun hats and dark glasses were also distributed, and even the school paper was pastel 'as white paper is trying to the eyesight'.[428] Gardening was still a core part of the curriculum, but now it was utilised to offer pupils the opportunity of maximum exposure to the sun (Figure 119).

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[424] Bryder, p. 76.
[425] London County Council, *London's Open-Air Schools*, p. 1.
[426] Ibid., p. 6.
[427] Ibid.
[428] London County Council, *London's Open-Air Schools*, p. 9.

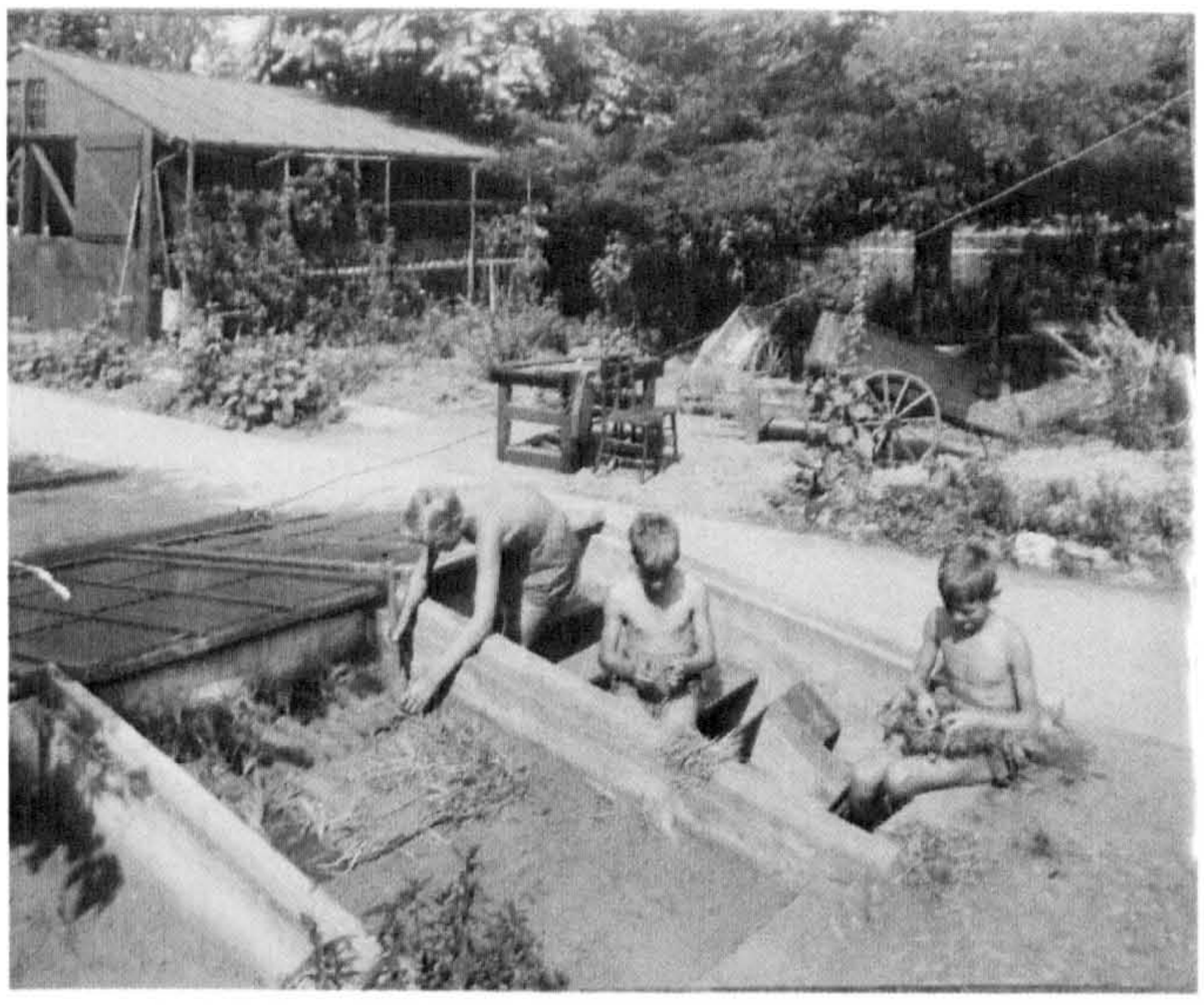

Figure 119: Boys working in cold-frame at Stowey School, Sep 1937 (Source: LCC Stowey File, LMA) wearing their regulation shorts.

4.12 The Development of Gardening in Open-Air Schools

Just as gardening had been utilised in the early examples of open-air schools to develop the strength of weak children, so it was now used to afford children exposure to sunlight (Figure 120).

Figure 120: Boys picking fruit at Stowey School, Sep 1937 (Source: LCC Stowey File, LMA)

For the first time, the 1923 *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education* gave a breakdown of how lessons at an open-air school should be taught, and this included a section on gardening:

> A special feature should be made of *Gardening.* The school should not be content with a mere allotment garden, but an endeavour should be made gradually to construct, where this does not already exist, a proper English garden with hedges, lawn, shrubs, flower and vegetable and fruit garden. This will afford much variety of occupation for children of various capacities. The kitchen garden should provide most of the vegetables required by the school. Individual plots will be necessary, especially for younger children.[429]

Photographs taken by the LCC of children gardening at Wood Lane Open-Air School in the 1930s are, like the above photographs of Stowey

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[429] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1923 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education,* p. 93.

School, evidence that the guidelines given by the Chief Medical Officer were implemented. Horticultural features mentioned in the 1923 Annual Report such as the hedges, lawns, shrubs, flower, vegetable and fruit gardens are all evident in photographs of Wood Lane Open-Air School (Figures 121 and 122).

Figure 121: Gardening at Wood Lane Open-Air School, May 1930 (Source: LCC Wood Lane File, LMA), illustrating many of the horticultural features mentioned in the 1923 *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education.*

Figure 122: Gardening Plots at Wood Lane Open-Air School, May 1935 (Source: LCC Wood Lane File, LMA)

Comparing the simple gardening exercises of the early open-air schools at Bostall Wood (Figure 95), Montpelier House (Figure 105) and

Shrewsbury House (Figure 106) with the photographs taken at Stowey and Wood Lane Open-Air Schools (Figures 119, 120, 121 and 122), it is evident how much more advanced the children's instruction in gardening had become. It appears that the development of gardening within the open-air school curriculum was initiated by the publication of Hugh Broughton's *The Open Air School* in 1914. The introduction by Lady St. Helier, claimed that 'this little book contains all that is worth knowing about Open Air Schools'.[430] This is probably not an exaggeration as Broughton was involved with the British open-air movement almost from its creation.[431] Broughton's book contains a whole chapter devoted to nature study and gardening, which he claims, 'of all the subjects of the ordinary curriculum...are the most suitable for Open Air Schools'.[432] Broughton suggested that children at open-air schools should make a miniature meadow, a hedgerow, a miniature heath, a bog, a pond, a wild wood garden, a rockery, a water garden, paths, borders, vegetables, fruits, fruit trees, cold frames, and tend to poultry, rabbits, bees and even cows and pigs.[433] His range of suggestions underlines his enthusiasm for gardening and nature study in the curriculum and he states that, 'it is difficult to know when to stop writing about gardening and its allied subjects'.[434] Broughton's justification for a broad gardening curriculum was that .

> The scholars will learn how to spend their leisure time profitably in the open air when, later on in life, factory and office claim the greater part of their time. Further, such work will indicate to the most suitable boys and girls how to earn their living entirely on the land. We must remember that the life in the Open Air School makes restoration to health possible for these children, and it is equally true for many of them that an open air life is the only means of keeping that health. When school days are over it should be possible to place many boys and girls on farms, small holdings, or market gardens.[435]

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[430] Broughton, Introduction by Lady St. Helier, p. v.
[431] Broughton is listed as being on the staff for Shrewsbury House School as an Assistant Master in the LCC 1908 Report, p. 8.
[432] Broughton, p. 129.
[433] Ibid., pp. 129-145.
[434] Ibid., p. 145.
[435] Ibid., pp. 141-142.

Gardening in the open-air school had thus developed from the simple garden exercises of the early 1900s that encouraged children to improve their concentration and physical fitness into a romantic recreational pleasure of the private open-air schools and then as a vocational training that it was hoped would create life-long health for school children.

As well as being developed as a subject in its own right, the early experiments using gardening and nature as cross-curricula subjects were also expanded upon in *The Open Air School.* Broughton gives examples of how 'all the usual school subjects may be dealt with...in as practical a manner as possible',[436] including the teaching of arithmetic, weather study, history, geography, handwork and clay modelling, all of which could all utilise the natural surroundings of the open-air school to teach the children and also to give them exercise.

Photograph by *A. J. Green.*

DRAMATIZED HISTORY—DEATH OF WAT TYLER.

Figure 123: History Lesson at an (unidentified) open-air school c. 1912. (Source: Broughton, *The Open-Air School,* p. 117.)

Where physical interaction was more difficult - for example in reading, composition, music and drawing - Broughton suggested using nature as an inspiration. He recommended that 'simple books dealing with outdoor

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[436] Ibid., p. 77.

life'[437] were suitable texts for reading, such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Marryat's *Children of the New Forest* and *Treasure Island* by Stevenson. Nature myths, he claimed, 'are excellent for oral composition',[438] whilst the substance of the nature lessons could provide inspiration for written composition.

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[437] Ibid., p. 180.
[438] Ibid.

4.13 The Influence of Open-Air Principles on General Education

The concept of 'adopting manual instruction (learning by doing)'[439] was not only popular in the open-air school, but was also embraced by general elementary schools:

> The Open Air Schools have taken the lead in modern methods of education. Learning by doing is making rapid headway in all types of schools; but in Open Air Schools, owing to the small classes, the environment, and the special needs of the children, teachers have found it not only easier, but absolutely necessary, to adopt manual methods of education. This had been done with so much success that inspectors, lecturers in training colleges, teachers of all grades, have come from every quarter to learn the new methods, not only for adoption in other Open Air Schools, but also to be introduced into indoor schools of all kinds.[440]

Open-air schools had proved the value of incorporating gardening into the curriculum and the 'manual methods of education' increasingly found their way into mainstream education. By 1909, books were being published offering teachers guidance on teaching gardening in general primary and secondary schools,[441] as well as on utilising gardening and nature as an inter-disciplinary opportunity within the curriculum.[442] By 1915, Sir George Newman, the first Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education acknowledged:

> There can be no doubt that the open-air education movement is beginning to spread throughout the schools of the country. In some hundreds of schools, for instance, classes are now being held in the playground; there has been a marked development of school gardening, school journeys and Nature study; open-air class-rooms have been provided, and in other ways the genius of open-air education is manifesting itself.[443]

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[439] Wilmot and Saul, p. 8.
[440] Broughton, p. 20.
[441] Rankine, W Francis, *School Gardening* (Pitman, 1909) and an article by Brewer, G W S, 'Educational School Gardening', *The Year Book of Open Air Schools and Children's Sanatoria 1915*, pp. 158-162.
[442] These include several books by Feasey, J Eaton: *Geometry etc for Primary and Secondary Schools* (Pitman, 1909); *In the Open Air: A Series of Outdoor Lessons in Arithmetic, Mensuration; In the Garden – A Series of Lessons in Nature Study – Mainly Plant Life – to be Given in the School Garden* (Pitman, 1910),); *Garden and Playground Nature Study* (Pitman, 1911).
[443] Kelynack, quoting Sir George Newman, now regarded as one of the pioneers of paediatrics in this country, p. 9.

By 1929, the parks in London, which had earlier been utilised by open-air schools, were now also used for the outside education of ordinary schoolchildren with some 170 classes taking place.[444] However, the open-air school movement was to have an influence on mainstream education beyond the curriculum and use of local parks. In 1929 it was recognised that the open-air philosophy was 'reflected in the design of the most recently erected elementary schools. These have been planned on the open-air principle, and it may confidently be expected that the schools of the future will be more generally built on these lines'.[445] By 1945, building regulations for schools included the requirement to provide playgrounds or playing fields, that classrooms were to have '6 air changes per hour', and that 'so far as practicable there should be cross ventilation. At least one half of every window area must be made to open and every window must be so constructed that the amount and direction of the incoming air can be regulated according to the direction of the wind'.[446] Unfortunately attempts to create schools that were built incorporating open-air school design principles were hampered for the simple reason that very few new schools were built after the World War I: 'Various reports published in 1964 showed that 71 per cent of existing primary schools were built before 1914 and so were 40 per cent of secondary modern schools'.[447]

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[444] LCC, *The Special Services of Education in London* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 100.
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ministry of Education, *Report of the Chief Medical Officer, 1939-1945,* p. 107.
[447] Foot, P W R, *The Child in the Twentieth Century* (Cassell, 1968), p. 61.

4.14 The Decline of Open-Air Schools

The Open-Air School reached the height of its popularity during the mid to late 1930s, but, despite being such a popular concept, it fell into decline just before and after World War II. This decline seems to have begun with the retirement of Sir George Newman (1870-1948), the first Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education and now regarded as one of the pioneers of paediatrics in this country. Newman had been actively involved with the creation of London's first open-air schools, and throughout his reports for the Board of Education (1908-1934) he was a constant advocator for the development of open-air schools, which he regarded as 'an institution which has very amply justified its existence'.[448] Reading the *Annual Reports of the Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education* after Newman's retirement in 1934, it is noticeable that the enthusiasm with which Newman had reported yearly on open-air schools was lacking by those who followed him. Unfortunately for the open-school movement, Newman's retirement also coincided with that of Dr Alfred Eichholz (1869-1933), and Dr Ralph Henry Crowley (1869-1953), both long serving Medical Officers at the Board of Education. Both Eichholz and Crowley had been involved with the LCC's early open-air school experiments and with their departure at the same time as Newman's, it appears that no-one was left at the Board of Education to continue to promote the open-air cause.

In the years between Sir George Newman's retirement and World War II, there is evidence that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who visited such schools on behalf of the government, were beginning to question the validity of the open-air school system. One report of an Inspector's findings at Springwell House, South London in 1938 recorded that the teaching showed, 'no trace of modern or original methods', that the

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[448] Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1929 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, p. 32.

facilities were 'dingy and dirty' and that 'London has no reason to be proud of these schools, for the general unsatisfactory condition' .[449]

The situation was further aggravated during World War II. The war brought about the closure of all of London's open-air schools as children were either evacuated or kept at home by their parents. Throughout the rest of the country, teachers, particularly those with an aptitude and experience of teaching in the open-air school, were scarce, as were medical officers, suitable premises, domestic staff, equipment and even paper. [450] Following the end of World War II, the necessity for open-air schools was lessened as the newly developed Welfare State system was put into effect. Restrictions on environmental pollution were introduced, many slums were removed, maternal care and domestic hygiene improved enormously, and the worst cases of poverty were eliminated through the provision of state benefits. As a consequence of the improved social and health conditions, cases of tuberculosis drastically dropped.[451]

By 1951, a lengthy report of the state of surviving open-air schools revealed that many were run-down and damp and that the teachers lacked the initiative to organise the outside activities that had once been at the heart of the open-air movement. Simply put, 'many of the old ideals had been lost sight of'.[452] As predicted by the Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education in his 1951 report, open-air schools increasingly diminished.[453] Many of the 'delicate' children who would have previously been selected for an open-air education were now enrolled into the new all-inclusive schools which were a cheaper and more convenient option than providing them with an open-air education.

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[449] Abbott, Chris, *Springwell House: The Story of a London Open-Air School* (Privately printed by Author, 1986), p. 14.
[450] Ministry of Education, *Annual Report for 1939-45 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education*, pp. 88-89.
[451] Between 1938 to 1951 the child death rate from tuberculosis had been cut to a third (Cruickshank quoting 'Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education 1952-53 p. 8), p. 71.
[452] Cruickshank, p. 72.
[453] Ministry of Education, *Annual Report for 1951 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education*, p. 124.

The remaining original open-air schools, which were once predicted would, 'form an important part of the educational system in all great centres of population'[454] were either closed down or given over to children with special needs.

Although the open-air schools were regarded at their height as being very successful - 'the remarkable part of it is that there have been no failures at all'[455] - modern commentators are as sceptical of the movement as were the parents of the first attendees. Writing for *The Independent* in 2005, Brian Cathcart describes conditions at London's Apsen House Open-Air School in the 1930s as something 'like a missing chapter from Nicholas Nickleby', [456] and a 'scary' fashion, 'when viewed from more than half a century on'.[457] Cathcart accuses the open-air school 'regime' of 'exposing sickly children to Arctic conditions' and scorns the 'fresh air which so obsessed the pioneers',[458] arguing that,

> There must have been a benefit in simply removing children from environments rich in germs, but once they were in clean, well-kept schools it didn't much matter whether they were taught indoors or outdoors. The true causes of the weight gains and other improvements recorded in the regular health inspections at the schools were surely the plentiful supply of food, the exercise, the medical care and the attention of teachers and staff.[459]

What Cathcart fails to appreciate is that before open-air schools, there was 'no provision for the children who were excluded from Elementary Schools on the grounds of health',[460] and it was only with the creation of open-air schools that children who were ill were offered facilities and conditions that would aid their recovery.

Research for this chapter has proved that the open-air school was a revolutionary educational concept. Although food, hygiene and medical

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[454] Broughton, p. 15.
[455] Ibid., p. 18.
[456] Cathcart, Brian, 'Health Special: School's Out', *Independent on Sunday*, pp. 18-20.
[457] Ibid., p.19.
[458] Ibid., p. 20.
[459] Ibid.
[460] *Open Air School Regents Park attached to the St Marylebone Dispensary for the Prevention of Consumption, Marylebone Road. Report for the Year ending December 1929*, p. 1.

attention undoubtedly contributed to the recovery of children, there is little doubt that access to fresh air and the use of nature and gardening which were at the heart of the open-air school principles were key to the improvements so frequently noted in the children. The natural and horticultural opportunities and resources available at the open-air school sites inspired the teachers to develop a more manual, interactive means of educating children, and this would gradually be absorbed into mainstream education. Elementary and secondary schools were developed along open-air school lines with increased ventilation, access to playgrounds, smaller classes and a more liberal curriculum compared to old fashioned elementary schools. Open-air schools may have 'outlived their usefulness within fifty years of their creation'[461] but the theories they developed revolutionised mainstream educational provision and the environment in which that takes place, and those theories have continued to influence education to the present day.

[461] Wilmot and Saul, p. 334.

4.15 The Royal Horticultural Examinations in Cottage and Allotment Gardening for Teachers (1904) and Juniors (1906): The Academic Versus Practical Debate Regarding Training Young Gardeners

It is clear that horticulture and gardening were firmly established subjects in both open-air and mainstream schools. Not only did it contribute to the physical well-being of children by potentially affording them access to fresh air and exercise, but it was also regarded as being of educational benefit. It was an area of study in its own right, whether under the title of gardening, botany, horticulture or nature study, and was also valuable as a cross-curricula subject. It was therefore almost inevitable that horticulture and gardening would receive academic status through examination. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in London offered two examinations that are of relevance to this study. First, the 'Cottage and Allotment Gardening for Teachers', aimed at teachers in elementary schools, and second the 'Junior Examination' for those under the age of nineteen. Although these exams were taken country-wide, the link with London is strong as the RHS was based in the capital and there is evidence that there were candidates from London for both exams.

The growing recognition of the value of gardening as a teaching resource would inevitably have produced a demand for teachers in this subject, and the introduction of the RHS' Teachers' Examination was almost certainly a reflection of this. Although teaching gardening had many physical and educational benefits, it was also recognised that it could provide boys with an opportunity to gain a skill, and, with the RHS' Junior Examination, a qualification in a subject that lent itself to employment beyond school. The RHS' Junior Examination was introduced at the request of Stoke Farm Reformatory School, affiliated to the Open-Air School movement. Stoke Farm believed strongly in the importance of educating their pupils in gardening as a potential career. James Campbell, MD of Stoke Farm, observed that: 'No matter to what trade the reformatory boy may turn, his knowledge of gardening is always useful to

him...if the trade he has chosen fail him he can always find employment on the land'.[462]

Both exams were introduced during a period of intense debate amongst the gardening fraternity as to the relevance of exams in gardening.[463] The introduction of such exams represented a significant transition in the training of gardeners. Hitherto, gardening had been primarily regarded as a practical subject, learnt apprentice-style, but, with the introduction and rising popularity of exams in gardening, a gardener's training was moving away from the garden and into the classroom. Although the debate centred on exams for gardeners, both the Teachers' and Junior exams were implicated in this. Instead of boys commencing their training after school, they could begin at school, taught by teachers who had a qualification in this increasingly popular subject.

The RHS was founded in London in 1804, as a 'society devoted to the improvement of horticulture'.[464] Since its creation the RHS had been involved in the education and examination of gardeners, mostly in an attempt to raise the esteem, knowledge and remuneration of the gardening profession. The RHS established a school of horticulture when they acquired a garden in Chiswick in the 1820s. Here, under-gardeners between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six served as apprentices to the Head Gardeners. This traditional method of educating a gardener began to edge away from the garden and into the classroom in 1836, when the RHS introduced an exam for gardeners that had evolved into the RHS 'General Certificate' by 1893.[465] The General Certificate was followed by

[462] Campbell, James, 'School Garden in Reformatories for Boys' in Kelynack, p. 91.
[463] See: Watson, W, 'Examinations in Horticulture', *The Gardeners' Chronicle,*17 February 1906, p. 106; Henslow, George, 'Examination in Horticulture', *The Gardeners' Chronicle,* 14 February 1906, p. 124; GHHW, 'Horticultural Examinations', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 March 1906, p. 141; Watson, W, 'Examinations in Horticulture', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 March 1906, p. 106; Rogers, AET, Sudeley Castle, Glos, 'Horticultural Examinations', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 March 1906, p. 141; WG, 'Horticultural Examinations', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 March 1906, p. 141; Castle, L 'Horticultural Examinations', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 March 1906 p. 142; Anon, 'Examinations in Horticulture' (Editorial), *Gardeners' Chronicle,* 17 March, 1906, pp. 163-4; Baker, FJ, 'Horticultural Education', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1907,* pp. 152-162.
[463] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1907,* p. 153.
[464] Elliot, Brent, *The Royal Horticultural Society: A History* ((Phillimore, 2004), p. 1.
[465] This is excellently documented in Elliot, Chapter 18, 'Amateur and Professional', pp. 313-335.

exams in 'Cottage and Allotment Gardening for Teachers' in 1904, 'Employees in Public Parks' in 1906 and the 'Junior Examination' in 1908. There was much debate as to the relevance of such exams in the subject of gardening. This appears to have been particularly fuelled by the announcement by the London County Council (LCC) that they proposed to use the RHS General Examination, introduced in 1893 and which was to be the precursor to the Junior Examination, as a means of assessing promotion for its gardeners.[466] The LCC's proposal ignited the gardening theory (exam) versus practical (apprenticeship) debate. Although this debate was not aimed directly at either the Teachers' or Junior Examinations, the arguments raised, particularly in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* throughout 1906, seem to be indicative of the general feeling towards gardening exams per se. Given the tight timeframe within which these three exams were introduced (1904 for Teachers, 1906 for Park Employees and 1908 for Juniors), and the already established link between teachers teaching gardening to boys for the purpose of gaining employment post-school, it seems obvious that the arguments for and against the Parks Examination also applied to the other two. Those who were in favour of the exams argued that they would be raise the status and, therefore, the pay of gardeners and give them a theoretical background. Those against argued that gardening was a subject that could only be learnt on site.

It was amid such debate that the Teachers' Examination and Junior Examinations were introduced.

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[466] Elliot, p. 317.

4.16 The RHS Teachers' Examination

The Teachers' Examination was introduced in 1904, which was a landmark year for the RHS. 1904 marked the centenary of the Society, and to commemorate this occasion they not only opened their new London headquarters at Vincent Square but also purchased gardens at Wisley. It would be trite to suggest that the Teachers' Examinations formed the basis of any centenary celebrations, but its introduction at a time when the society were, by their own admission, 'naturally attracting considerable attention'[467] cannot go without comment.

The exam was announced in both the *Gardener's Chronicle*[468] and also the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, the latter of which announced:

> The Society will also hold an examination in COTTAGE GARDENING on Tuesday, June 21, 1904. This examination is intended for, and will be confined to, Elementary School Teachers. It has been undertaken for the first time this year in view of the increasing demand in country districts that the schoolmaster shall be competent to teach the elements of Cottage Gardening, and the absence at present of any test whatever of such competence.[469]

The same wording was used in each successive *Journal* thereafter with one slight, but significant amendment. From 1906 the second sentence was amended to read, '...intended for, and will be confined to, Elementary *and Technical* [my italics] School Teachers'.

The examination was popular, and the numbers taking it give an indication of the popularity that gardening and horticulture were enjoying in both the Elementary and Technical School. One source[470] states that the number of Elementary School Gardens in England and Wales in 1907 was 1,138, including a number in London, and that these were responsible for teaching upwards of 17,000 boys. At this time girls were

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[467] Elliot, p. 34.
[468] *Gardener's Chronicle*, 7 May 1904, p. 298.
[469] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1903-4*, p. CCLXIX.
[470] AN, 'Elementary School Gardens', *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 4 April 1908, p. 219.

excluded from gardening, and were limited to 'what is described as Nature study'.[471] With reference to the popularity of teaching gardening in the Elementary School, it was predicted: 'that the movement will extend is certain'.[472]

Unfortunately no archives exist regarding the RHS exams, so statistics for the teaching exam have had to be gleaned from the annual *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society.* For the years 1904-1917 full reports are outlined in the *Journal*, which provide not only a report on the examination itself, but also the names and addresses of all entrants and their grade. From 1918 this information is sporadic at best, and more often than not is not referred to at all in the report, or if it is receives only a brief mention. Therefore, for the statistics regarding the examination are limited to 1904-1917.

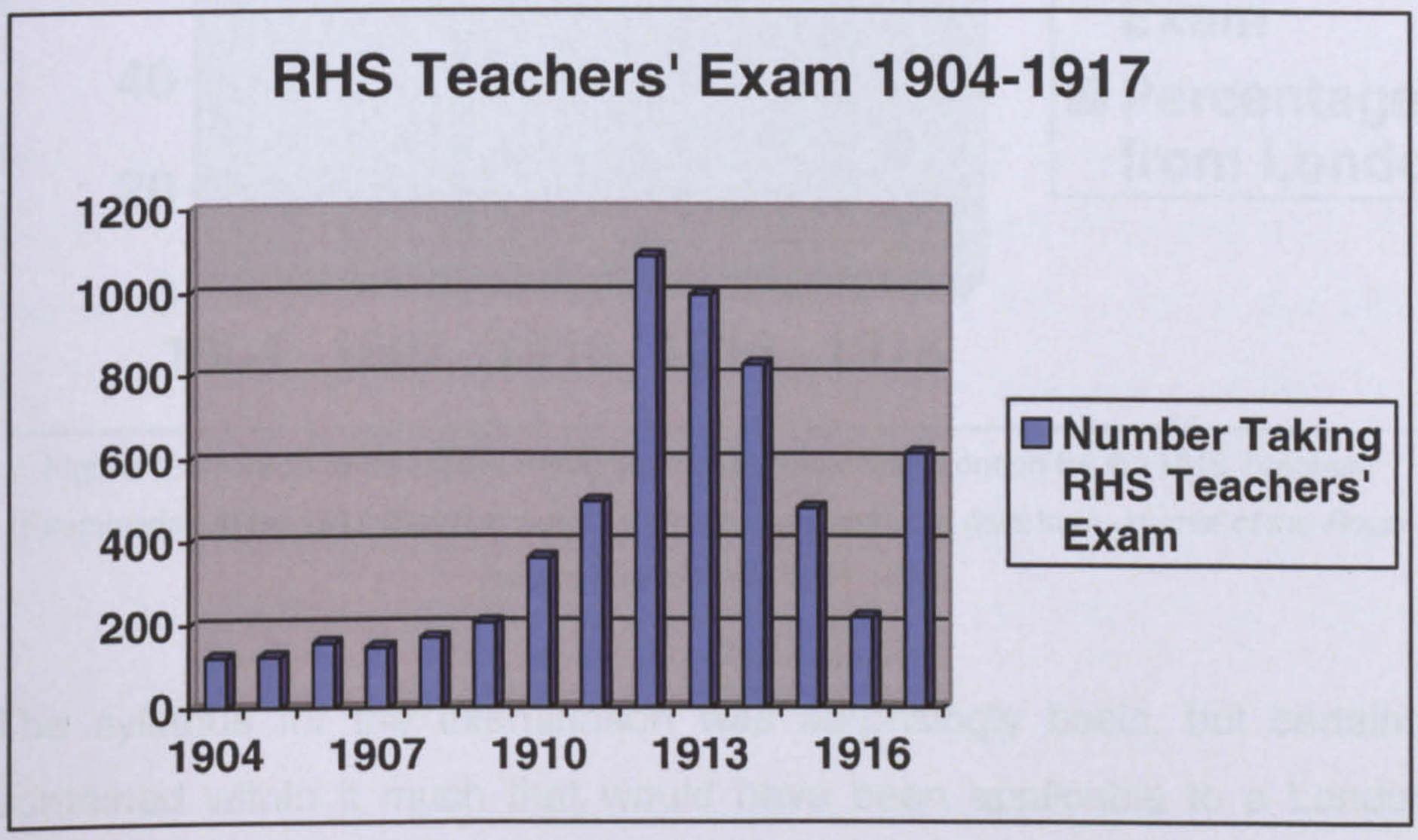

Figure 124: Graph Illustrating the Total Number of Entrants for the RHS Teachers' Examination 1904-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1904-1918)

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[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid.

It is evident from Figure 124 that the number of students taking the exam steadily increased, reaching a height in 1912 of 1,089, a record number that was never to be exceeded.

Whilst the examination was clearly aimed at teachers of 'Cottage and Allotment Gardens', addresses of candidates taking the exams listed in the RHS Annual Reports confirm that a number of candidates sitting the exam were based in London and may subsequently, or may well already have been, in employment in London (Figure 125).

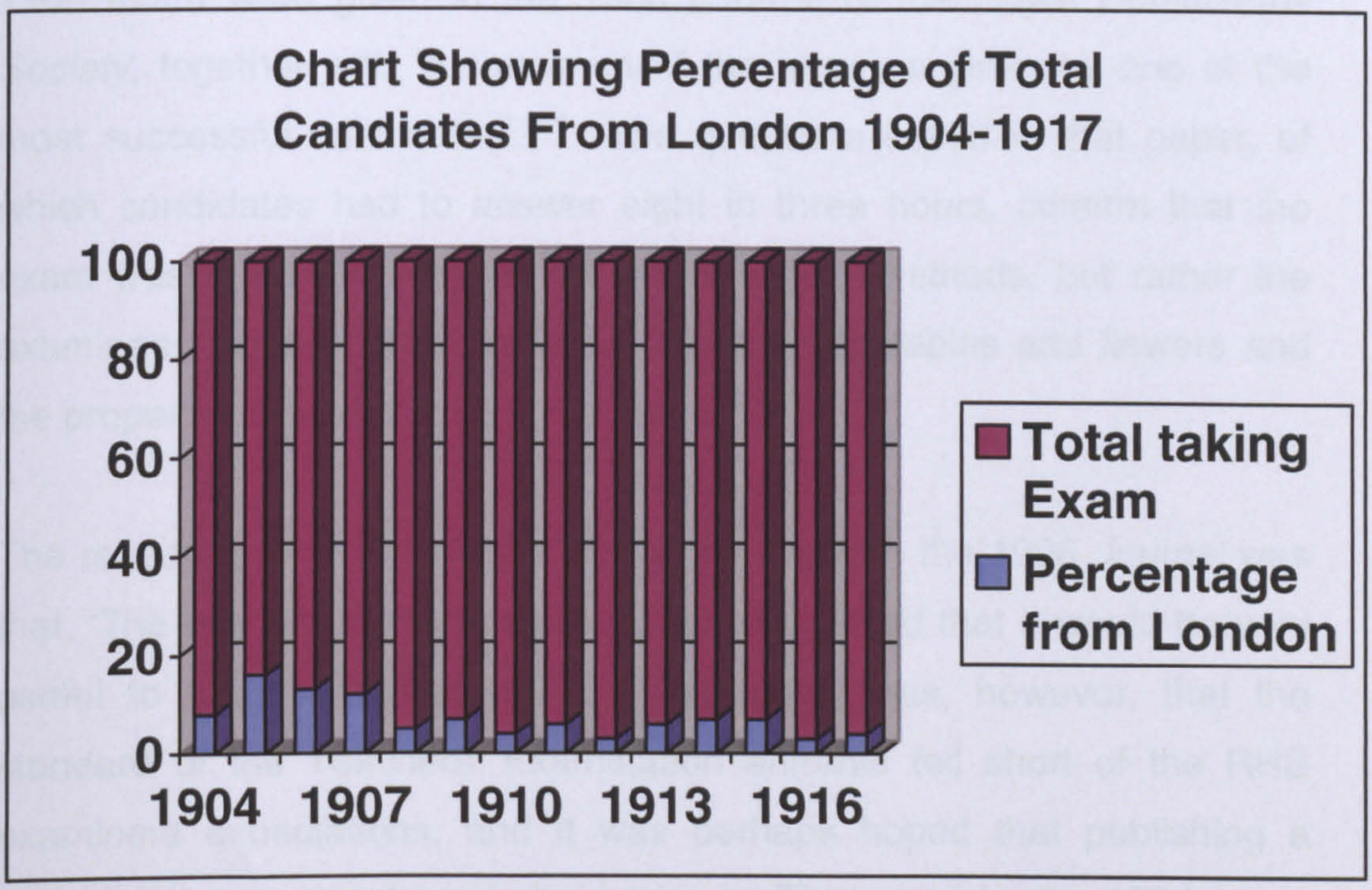

Figure 125: Graph Showing the Percentage of Entrants from London for the RHS Teachers' Examination 1904-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1904-1918)

The syllabus for the examination was surprisingly basic, but certainly contained within it much that would have been applicable to a London gardening teacher. It was outlined as covering:

1. Soils.
2. Information as to the best average sizes of cottage gardens and allotments such as men engaged in diverse vocations can cultivate in spare time.
3. Preparation of soils for the reception of crops of all descriptions.
4. Renovating neglected gardens.
5. Manuring soils for diverse crops.
6. Spring vegetable crops.

7. Summer crops – successional.
8. Autumn or winter crops for successional purposes.
9. General treatment to secure best results for all seasons.
10. Suitable fruits for cottage gardens.
11. Fruits suitable for allotment culture.
12. Flowers for cottage gardens, seasons of flowering, methods of propagations etc.
13. Flowers suited for allotments, varieties and general culture.
14. Window gardening, inside and out.[473]

No reference was made to teaching methods. Although no exam papers exist in the RHS archives pertaining to this exam, the questions for the 1906 exam were given in the 1906 *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, together with 'a specimen of the answers given by one of the most successful candidates'.[474] The questions asked in that paper, of which candidates had to answer eight in three hours, confirm that the exam was in no way concerned with teaching methods, but rather the examinees' knowledge of varieties of fruits, vegetables and flowers and the proper methods for raising the same.[475]

The reason given for printing a specimen paper in the 1906 *Journal* was that, 'The examiners in this examination suggested that it would be very useful to future candidates'.[476] The reality was, however, that the standard of the Teachers' Examination entrants fell short of the RHS examiners expectations, and it was perhaps hoped that publishing a specimen paper may have helped raise it. The report for the 1904 paper states: 'There is yet reason to express regret that a large portion of them were, in respect of practical knowledge in allotment and cottage gardening, somewhat crude'.[477]

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[473] This has been précised from the Outline Syllabus for the School Teachers' Examination in Cottage and Allotment Gardening, as given in the Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, 1906, pp. 219-220.
[474] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1906*, p. 201.
[475] The 1906 examination paper is reproduced in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1906*, pp. 201-2.
[476] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1906*, p. 201.
[477] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1904*, Examiners' Report on Examination in Cottage and Allotment Gardening, 1904, p. 166.

The Examiners' Report further complains of the "bookish' rather than…practical aspect'[478] of the answers. Despite the specimen paper, and assurances in subsequent Examiners' Reports that there had been 'a distinct advance in the answers pertaining to the practice treatment of Cottage and Allotment Gardens in general'[479] and 'the greatly improved nature of the replies furnished by the candidates generally',[480] statistics for the examination show that the number of entrants receiving a First Class result (Figure 126) steadily declined.

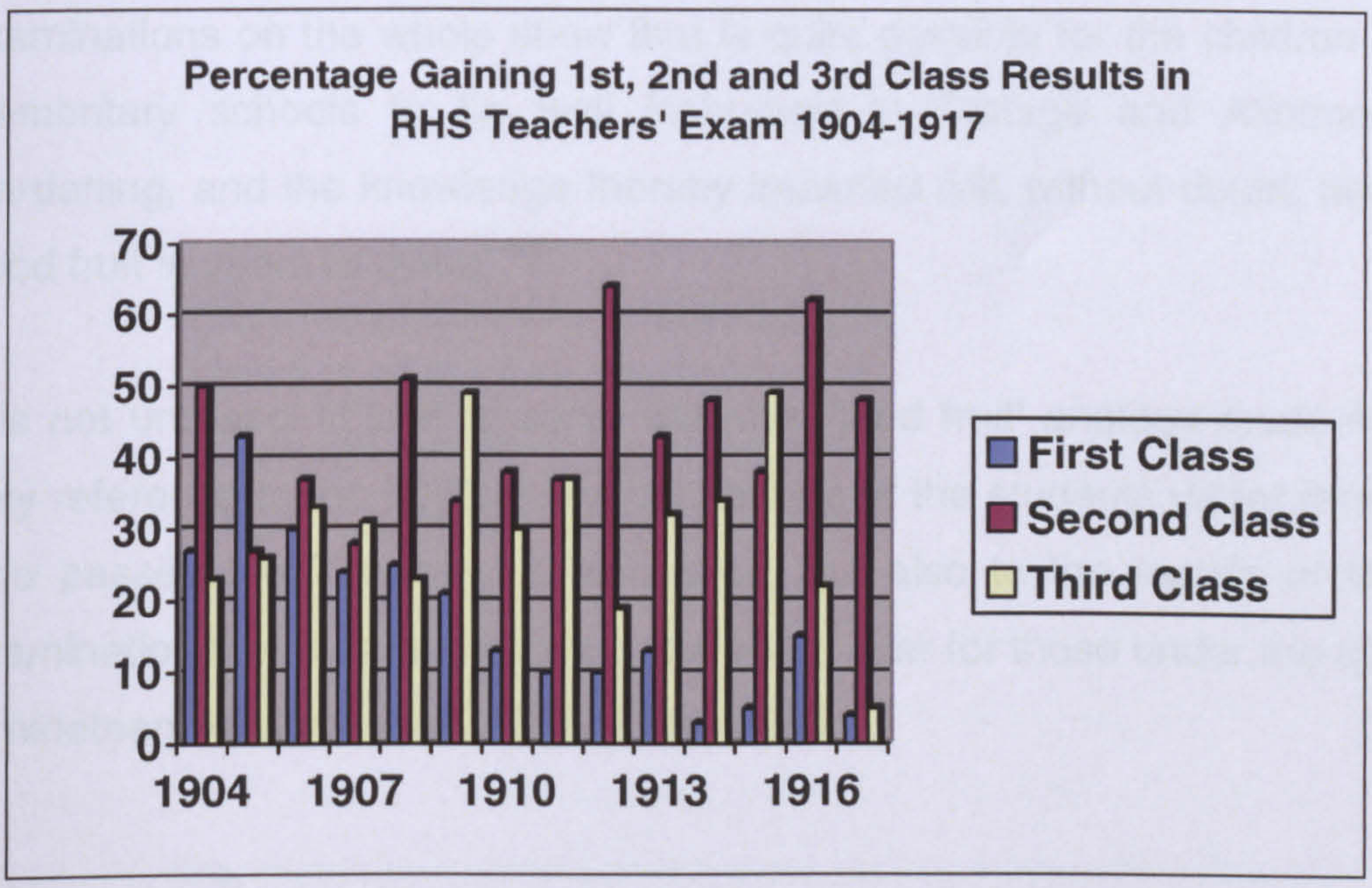

Figure 126: Graph Showing the percentage of Entrants Gaining First, Second and Third Class Results in the RHS Teachers' Examination 1904-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1904-1918)

This gives an interesting strong counter-argument to Watson's letter, in which he argued that those who were academic would do well in these exams, leaving behind those who had the practical experience but not the intellectual capacity with which to express it. These results clearly demonstrate that an academic mind and a book-based knowledge of the subject were not sufficient to impress the RHS examiners.

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[478] Ibid.
[479] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1905*, p. 693.
[480] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1906*, p. 196.

Despite arguably disappointing results, there were certainly an impressive number of entrants for the Teachers' Examination, indicating that the exam was not only popular with teachers, but also presumably by those employing them. The Examiners' Report of 1909 reinforces this, 'it is most satisfactory to know that the possession of these Certifications of qualification to teach Cottage and Allotment Gardening is being so widely recognized by the Managers of Schools throughout the country'.[481] Although there appears to have been no significant shift in the grades achieved by the examinees (Figure 126) the examiners were sufficiently confident in the level of candidates to state: 'The results of these examinations on the whole show that is quite possible for the children in elementary schools to be well instructed in Cottage and Allotment Gardening, and the knowledge thereby imparted will, without doubt, bear good fruit in years to come'.[482]

It is not unreasonable to assume that the 'good fruit' analogy made not only reference to the horticultural capabilities of the students under those who passed the Teachers' Examination, but also to the results of the examination that was introduced a few years later for those under the age of nineteen, known as the Junior Examination.

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[481] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1910*, p. 281.
[482] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1904-5*, p. 693. This report was also cited in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1 July 1905.

4.17 The RHS Junior Examination

The Junior Examination was introduced with little fanfare. The *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* simply stated: 'In 1908, on March 25, a fourth examination is to be commenced for Juniors under 19 years of age in elementary horticulture'.[483] The introduction of the exam was commented on twice in the *Gardeners Chronicle*. Initially it merely stated, 'A fourth examination is also to be established – viz., for juniors under 19 years of age, in elementary gardening'.[484] This statement was slightly expanded upon the following week to:

> In addition to the examinations that are already conducted under the auspices of the Society, a new one is projected, suitable for youths under 19 years of age. It will follow the lines of the general examination, but will, we presume, be more elementary in character. It is both interesting and gratifying to note that the Society's examinations have resulted in raising the standard of knowledge, both scientific and practical, each successive year.[485]

This quotation raises two interesting points. First the acknowledgement, albeit most likely an assumption, that the RHS had raised 'the standard of knowledge' in both a 'scientific' and 'practical' way. Second the slight confusion regarding how the examination was to work in relation to the General Examination. The Examiners' Reports in *The Journal for the Royal Horticultural Society* confirms that the syllabus for the Junior Examination was the same as the Senior Exam. It is also worthy of comment that although both the General and Teacher Examinations were open to both sexes, the Junior Examination was 'Specially intended for lads and young men'.[486] As has already been established girls were excluded from gardening in the elementary school.

The syllabus and exam for both the Senior and Junior exams were divided into two sections: elementary principles on which horticultural

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[483] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1908* Proceedings of The Royal Horticultural Society, p. cxxii.
[484] *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 8 February 1908, p. 94.
[485] Ibid., p. 104.
[486] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1909*, p. 149.

practice is based and horticultural operations and practices. The subjects covered by the examinations were:

Elementary Principles

1. Soil;
2. Physiological values of water, heat and air in plant growth;
3. Structure of Seeds and their modes of germination;
4. The function of roots
5. The uses of stems and branches
6. The physiological function of leaves
7. The structure of tubers and other subterranean stems, the structure of bulbs and buds, the general phenomena of vegetative multiplication;
8. The physiological processes undergone in growth and development
9. The structure of flower-buds and flowers; the methods of pollinations natural and artificial;
10. Process of impregnation of the ovule;
11. Classification and description of fruits;
12. General characteristics of the commoner varieties of plants in cultivation
13. The Origin of Species

Horticultural Operations and Practices

1. Surveying and landscape gardening;
2. Choice of site for garden;
3. Description and use of implements;
4. Operations connected with the cultivation of the land;
5. Propagation;
6. Fruit culture;
7. Vegetable culture;
8. Flower culture;
9. Manures;
10. Improvement of plants by cross-breeding, hybridisation and selection;
11. Arboriculture;
12. Insect and fungus pests: prevention and treatment[487]

It is interesting to note how much more complex the syllabus of those taking the Junior RHS exam was compared to the syllabus of those training to teach them, and also that no allowance in the syllabus was made for the Juniors, despite the recommendation in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* letters by Rogers that such an exam should be less 'severe' than the General Examination. It therefore not surprising that both the results and number of entrants for the examinations were disappointing (Figure 136).

[487] Taken from 'Examination in Horticulture' syllabus outlined in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1902-03*, pp. 190-1.

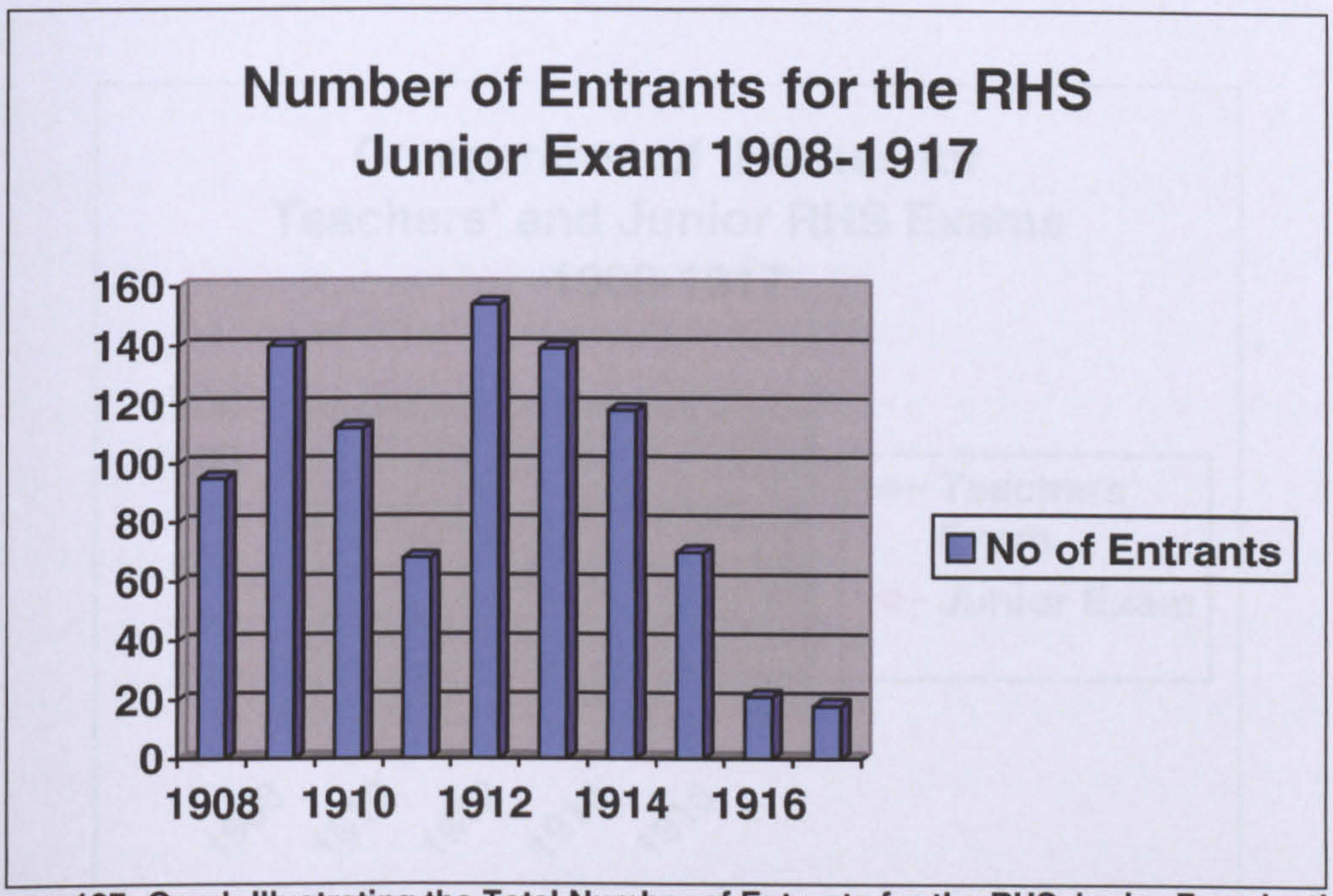

Figure 127: Graph Illustrating the Total Number of Entrants for the RHS Junior Examination 1908-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1909-1918)

The highest number of entrants for the Junior Examination was in 1912, which was also the same year as the highest number of entrants for the Teachers' Examination, but even during this year there were only 154 candidates. As with the Teachers' Examination there were entrants from London, and the average number of students who were entered with addresses in London between the years 1908-1917 was approximately 5%, which equates to approximately the same percentage as those taking the Teachers' Examination. The highest percentage of London-based candidates was 14% in 1909.

A comparison of the number of entrants for the Teachers' Examination with the number of entrants taking the Junior Examination illustrates a surprising trend. It would not be unreasonable to anticipate that the number of Juniors taking the examination would follow the peaks of those taking the Teachers' Examination, or would indeed begin to exceed it as the number of teachers grew. However, whilst there was a definite

increase in those taking the Teachers' Examination, this was never the case with the Junior Examination (Figure 128).

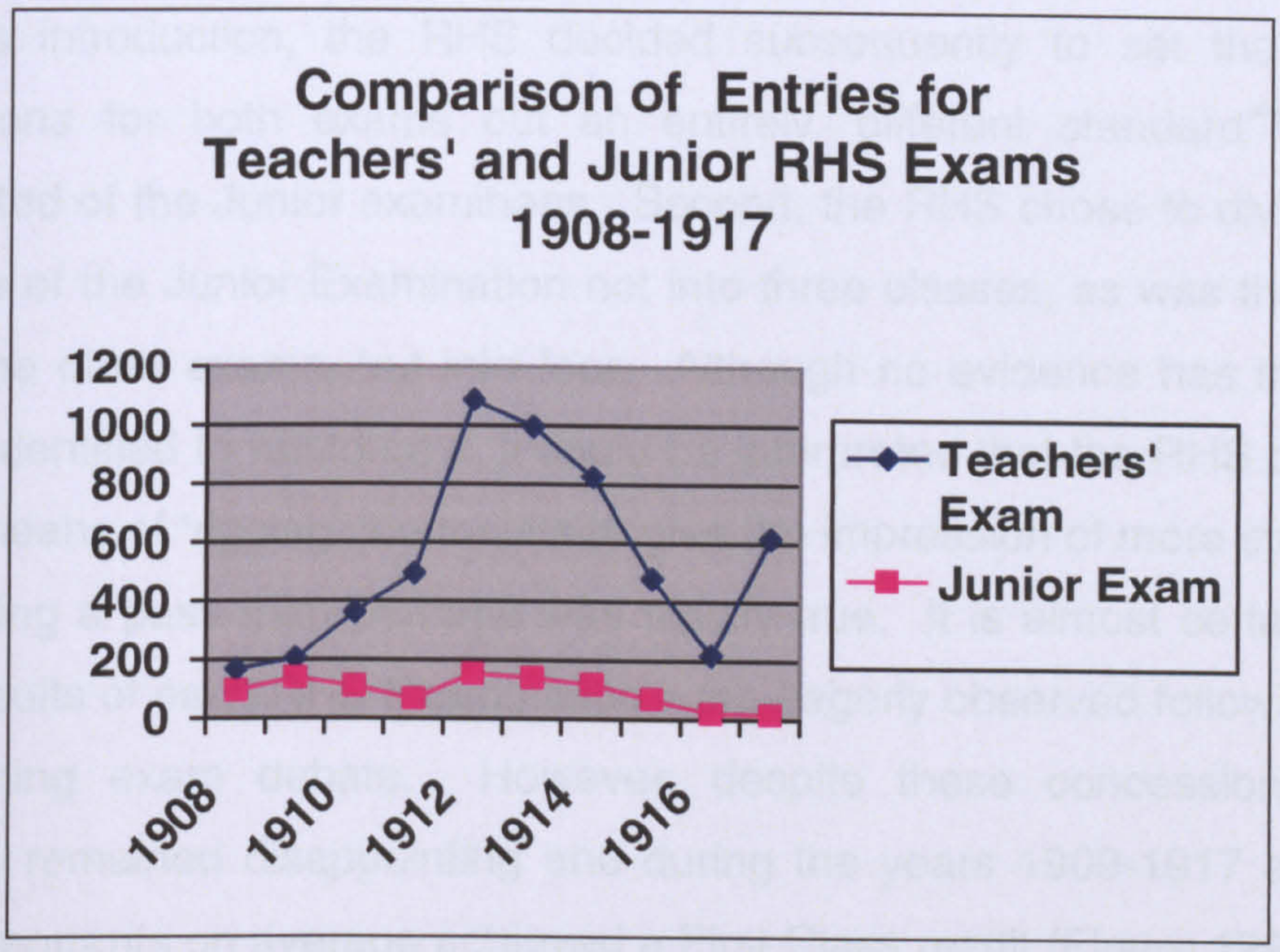

Figure 128: Graph Comparing Total Number of Entrants for the RHS Teachers' and Junior Examinations 1908-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1909-1918)

During the first year of the exam there were ninety-five entrants. Of these, only four achieved a First Class, twenty-two a Second, forty-seven a Third and twenty-two (almost a quarter of the total number who entered) 'failed to obtain sufficient marks to satisfy the examiners'.[488] The general feeling was that, 'the standard reached by the candidates on the whole was a very low one'.[489]

The main reasons the Examiners gave for the low standard in the first year of the examination were:

> In many cases it was only too evident that the candidates were insufficiently prepared for the examination, both in the way of having minds too little stored with the necessary elementary knowledge, and also in the power of expressing what they knew on paper. In other cases an attempt at preparation had been made, by learning by rote an account of certain processes, with the object of reproducing the account verbatim.[490]

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[488] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1909*, p. 149.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid.

The RHS attempted to address the low grades achieved in the first year of the exam in two ways. Firstly, having set different questions for both the General Certificate and the Junior Examination in the first year of the latter's introduction, the RHS decided subsequently to set the same questions for both exams but an entirely 'different standard'[491] was expected of the Junior examinees. Second, the RHS chose to divide the results of the Junior Examination not into three classes, as was the case with the other exams, but into four. Although no evidence has thus far been identified to reinforce it, it could be interpreted that the RHS did this as a means of 'rigging' the results to give the impression of more students obtaining a pass than perhaps was strictly true. It is almost certain that the results of each RHS Examination were eagerly observed following the gardening exam debate. However, despite these concessions, the results remained disappointing and during the years 1909-1917 a mere 4% of entrants on average achieved a First Class result (Figure 129).

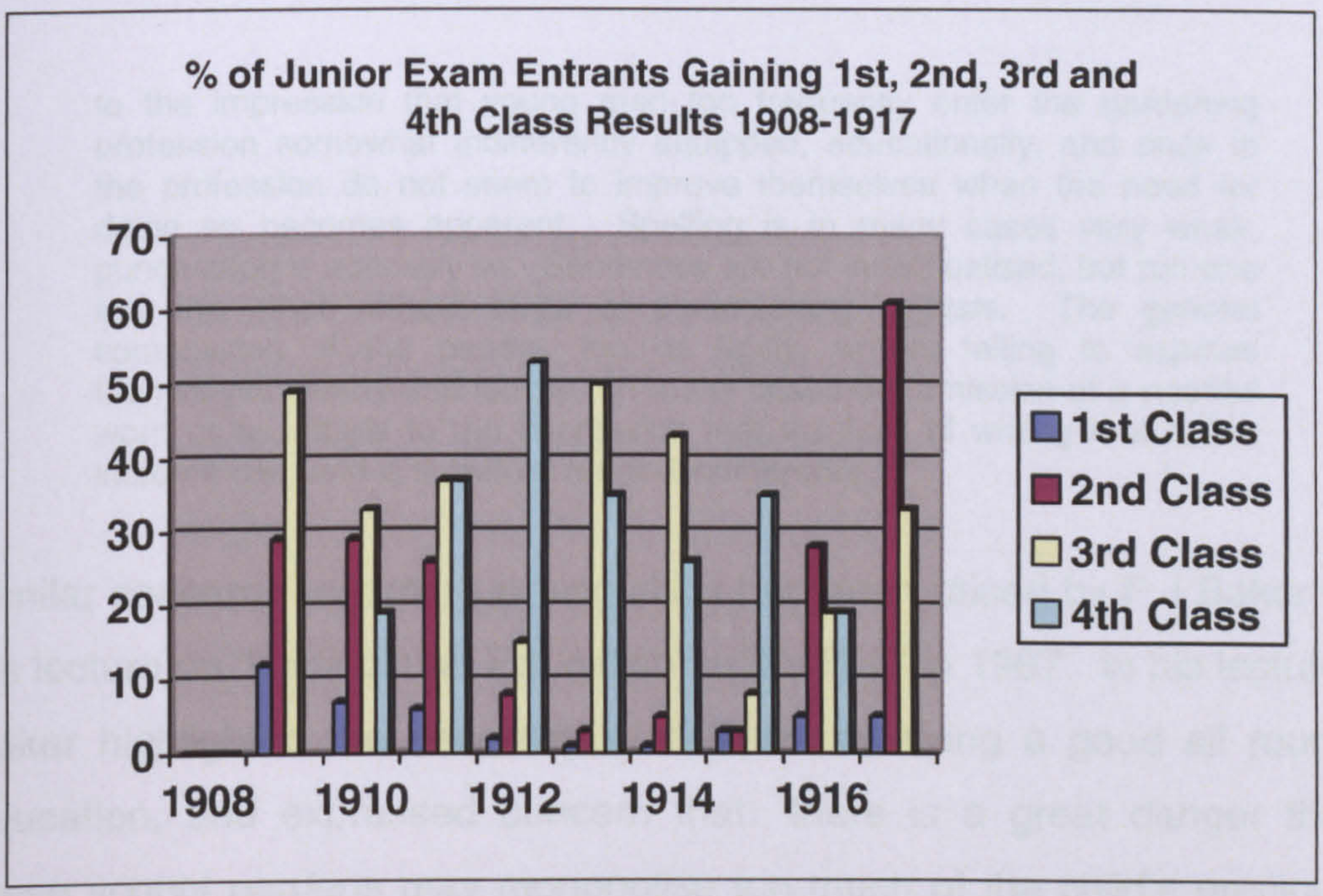

Figure 129: Graph Showing the Percentage of RHS Junior Examination Entrants Gaining First, Second, Third and Fourth Class Results 1908-1917 (Source: Author's Graph compiled from data from *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1908-1918)

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[491] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1910*, p. 272.

This raises the interesting question of why the standard was so low. It may have been due to poor teaching, which is quite possible given the limited syllabus of the Teachers' Examination compared to the syllabus expected to be covered for the Junior Examination. It is also possible that the examination was quite simply too advanced for juniors or that those earmarked for a career in gardening were not academic enough to pass exams, as was originally argued by Watson a few years before. There is evidence to suggest that any, or indeed all, of these may be the reason. There may, however, have been a far more basic possible contributing factor, and that was the writing skills of the exam candidates.

In a letter in the *Gardener's Chronicle* printed just before the introduction of the Junior Examination, 'AD' wrote on the subject of 'Young Gardener's Literary Efforts'.[492] 'AD' was a reader and adjudicator of essays written by young gardeners in competitions for prizes offered by mutual improvement societies. His experience of this led:

> to the impression that young men too frequently enter the gardening profession somewhat indifferently equipped, educationally, and once in the profession do not seem to improve themselves when the need for doing so becomes apparent. Spelling is in many cases very weak, punctuation is specially so. Sentences are not individualised, but run one into the other without stops or commencing capitals. The general composition of the papers, too, is faulty, writers failing to express themselves clearly and lucidly. In many cases the omission of a needful word or two leads to the impression that the task of writing is a rather irksome one, and is therefore treated indifferently.[493]

Similar concerns regarding writing skills had been raised by F J Baker in his lecture on 'Horticultural Education' to the RHS in 1907. In his lecture, Baker highlighted the necessity of children receiving a good all round education, and expressed concern that: 'there is a great danger that these school gardens may monopolise too much of the child's precious time to the neglect of its general education'.[494]

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[492] AD 'Young Gardener's Literary Efforts', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 11 May 1907, p. 305.
[493] Ibid.
[494] Baker, FJ, 'Horticultural Education', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1907*, p. 155.

This raises an extremely interesting theory in light of all the initial debates regarding exams for gardeners in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* at the start of the century. It would seem possible that children with an interest and talent in gardening became so absorbed in the garden, and therefore developing the practical skills so many argued they needed, that they neglected their general education and in so doing were disadvantaged taking an exam in the very subject they excelled at and enjoyed. It has not been possible to produce evidence for this theory, beyond Mr Baker's quote, but certainly it provides a theory worthy of consideration as to why some children did so badly in the exams.

4.19 The Decline of the RHS Teachers' and Junior Examinations

Entrants for both the Teachers' and Junior Examinations went into decline following the World War I and continued to fall. In 1937, 259 teachers sat the exam, by 1960 there were only eleven entrants and by the early 1970s this had dwindled further to an average of four per annum, until eventually, 'it was decided that it served little useful purpose, and was discontinued'.[495]

The Junior Examination was discontinued long before the teacher's exam in 1959. It left with as little fanfare as it arrived: 'The General Examination in Horticulture for Juniors (those under 18 years of age) is to be discontinued and will not be held after 1958'.[496]

It has not been possible to locate archival evidence for the reasons behind discontinuing the exam, although it is possible to speculate on some of the reasons for this. The number of entrants for the exam had always been low; the post-war years saw the decline of the 'grand gardens' and as such the necessity for a large number of gardeners to maintain them and so gardening was simply not the guaranteed career it once was. The termination of the exams also coincided with the introduction of the school-based qualifications such as the General Certificate of Education in 1951 (and the Certificate of Secondary Education in the mid 60s) and these may well have superseded the necessity for exams by institutions such as the RHS. However, one of the strongest reasons for the loss of interest in the Junior Examination, by both candidates and the RHS, was the decline of school gardens. The early twentieth century pre-occupation with the benefits of gardens on health and education - as was so prevalent during the height of the Open-Air School Movement – had simply evaporated.

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[495] Elliot, p. 321.
[496] *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society 1958*, p. 72.

Both the Teachers' and Junior Examinations were introduced at the height of the popularity of school gardens and gardening as a subject. The introduction of such qualifications gave formal recognition to a subject that proved to have a significant role to play in the educational and physical development of children. There is still, however, one question raised during the period, and in this chapter, that remains unanswered despite much documented debate, and that is whether a classroom or practical education is more beneficial.

An article published in *The Guardian* in 2005 regarding the lack of trained horticulturalists in the profession[497] once again raised the issue of work experience versus qualifications. With the decline in modern apprenticeships and the increasing number of courses available, most gardeners commence their training in the classroom. Within the article, Peter Fields, Head Gardener of Bradenham Hall in Norfolk and chairman of the Professional Gardener's Guild points out: 'Getting hands-on experience is as important as an academic qualification', which Matt Thomas, a former lecturer in horticulture, reinforces: 'Qualifications are one thing, but aren't enough without having done the work'. It would appear that 100 years of debate has not been long enough to reach a conclusion as to the most successful way of educating a young gardener.

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[497] Champ, Hamish, 'Time to propagate a new view of gardening', *The Guardian,* 21 May 2005, p. 21.

5.

MARGARET MCMILLAN AND THE USE OF THE GARDEN IN NURSERY EDUCATION

5.1 Open-Air Schools, Nurseries and Margaret McMillan

An extension and development of the open-air school movement was the provision of open-air nurseries for children up to the age of five. This chapter will focus primarily on the main advocator of such education, Margaret McMillan (McMillan), and the open-air nursery school she created for working-class children in Deptford, The Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School (RMOANS). The provision of any form of nursery education for working-class children in the United Kingdom was a huge, and indeed controversial, innovation in educational history, but to provide this education in an open-air setting was truly inspirational. McMillan created the RMOANS with her sister Rachel in 1914, and this time-frame suggests that McMillan must have been influenced by the general open-air school movement. However, research for this chapter strongly suggests that given McMillan's background, character and career, McMillan would almost certainly have created an open-air nursery school regardless of whether or not the open-air school system had already been established. To reinforce this claim, the introductory section of this chapter explores the biographical background of McMillan, which inevitably influenced the motivations behind the creation of the RMOANS and the ways in which McMillan utilised the garden as the main educational tool in the school. McMillan's school and theories were highly inspirational and influential both at home and abroad and consequently this chapter will also explore how another nursery school in Chelsea also utilised the garden as an educational opportunity.

Margaret McMillan (1860-1931) was a lecturer, writer, propagandist and educationalist. Although an unfamiliar name today, McMillan created a nursery school that was, at the time, 'famous the world over because of

its pioneer work and the personality of its founders'.[498] Her early involvement with the Independent Labour party allowed McMillan to be heavily involved with the introduction of school baths, medical inspection, school meals, clinics, the abolition of half timers and the provision of nursery education. McMillan has attracted the interest of a number of biographers and a surge of biographies appeared shortly after her death, written by contemporaries who were keen to pay homage to the woman described as an 'energetic, indomitable hot-tempered Highland spinster [who] turned herself into one of those Terrible Nuisances who were in fact the salt of the earth'.[499] Some more modern writers have also documented her life, attracted no doubt by the extensive archival material that is available and McMillan's eventful life story: 'Margaret McMillan was one of the most fascinating characters of her time'.[500] However, although much has been written about McMillan, her use of the garden in the education of young children has received little or no attention within the realm of garden history. This chapter seeks to rectify that balance.

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[498] Cusden, E, *The English Nursery School* (Kegan Paul, 1938), p. 164.
[499] Priestly, J B, 'The Nuisance who Worked Miracles', *Daily Herald*, 27 June 1947.
[500] Bradburn, Elizabeth, *Margaret McMillan* (Routledge, 1989), p. 21.

5.2 Background to Margaret McMillan

Figure 130: Margaret McMillan (Source: University of Greenwich Archives), the main advocator of open-air nursery education.

McMillan was born in New York to Scottish parents. Her father, James McMillan, was descended from land-owning stock, but questioned, 'the rights of landlordism and the semi-feudal conditions of the Highlanders'[501] and so emigrated to America where he worked as a landscape gardener and later an estate manager.[502] Nonetheless James maintained links with Scotland, which he visited on a regular basis, and it was on one of these trips that he met and married McMillan's mother, Jean Cameron, taking his new wife back to America with him. James and Jean were to have three daughters, Rachel, Margaret and Elizabeth who was to die before her fourth birthday.

The family lived in Westchester County, New York, on the banks of the Hudson River. The family home was surrounded by trees and an estuary and was described as being 'made of wood and was painted a soft grayish-lavender colour: it was designed on the plan of the Dutch settlers' houses…with long wide-open windows that are like doors opening on the

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[501] McMillan, Margaret, *The Life of Rachel McMillan* (Dent & Sons, 1927), p. 3.
[502] Bradburn, p. 2.

stoep [veranda]'.[503] Many aspects of this early childhood home would later re-appear in the design of the open air shelters at the RMOANS, as will be explored later.

In her semi-autobiography, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,*[504] McMillan describes the countryside around their American home:

> The fields stretch on every side, big as prairies. In among the still fresh verdure the cardinal-coloured flowers blaze like the poppies in a Suffolk meadow. Sometimes we drive along miles of orchard land. The trees are abloom still, the perfume wanders past: the air is cool, still and sweet with the perfume of young blossom. There are no hedges, only bare fields, and orchards stretching far away like a pale sea.[505]

This descriptive passage clearly paints a beautiful picture of McMillan's early childhood environment, and in so doing confirms a love and appreciation of nature and the environment on the young McMillan. This passion for nature was to continue and develop throughout her life, and later it was noted that 'Margaret loved nature. When in search of rest and refreshment, she would make short visits to the countryside'.[506] McMillan's love of nature would later become a key influence in the design of the nursery that she would create many years later.

Although McMillan suffered from deafness caused by scarlet fever in her infancy,[507] she described her American childhood as 'a very happy life'.[508] This 'happy life' was brought to an abrupt end when her sister and father died within a few days of each other in 1865. With Rachel also ill and the family left bankrupt, McMillan's mother moved her remaining family back to Inverness in Scotland to live with her parents. One of McMillan's recent biographers has likened McMillan's departure from this American Arcadian ideal as being 'ejected from paradise'.[509] McMillan was a devout Christian and it seems there may be a link between her

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[503] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 8.
[504] Although this book was written by Margaret McMillan as a record of her sister's life, much of the book is about Margaret's own life.
[505] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 10.
[506] Bradburn, p. 169.
[507] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 10.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Steedman, Carolyn, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain* (Virago, 1990), p. 18.

associations of nature with a happy childhood, the expulsion from this 'paradise' or Eden and her desire to recreate a paradise in miniature for the working class inner-city children.[510]

Their new home was a modest suburban house with the benefit of a large garden that McMillan describes at length as being a walled garden containing daffodils, hawthorn and fruit trees, lilies, japonica, the scent of mint and thyme, roses, redcurrants and a summer house.[511] Once again this description provides evidence of McMillan's early love of nature and gardens.

Although the family was not wealthy, the two sisters were well educated. However, McMillan describes her early school experiences in Scotland as being full of 'anxiety and distress'.[512] McMillan vividly recalls how the children were beaten, the low standard of hygiene in the school which had 'Dusty walls, greasy slates, no hot water and no care of the physical body',[513] and the educational methodology of the day, whereby all children were taught by the same master at the same level regardless of their age or ability.[514] The teaching environment that McMillan experienced as a child was a teacher-centred one, and later in life she was to react against this by creating an educational environment based around a garden in which the teaching was to be child-centred and based on the individual.

By the time Rachel was eighteen, both the children's grandfather and mother had died within a three month period. Rachel was elected by the family to take care of her grandmother for the eleven years prior to her grandmother's death whilst McMillan trained as a finishing governess. McMillan was sent to France, Germany and Switzerland to study languages and music, the latter made possible by her hearing

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[510] The link between Eden and the use of gardens to educate children by McMillan is introduced by Viv Moriaty in *Margaret McMillan: 'I learn to Succour the Helpless,'* pp. 11-17.
[511] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 20.
[512] Ibid., p. 17.
[513] Ibid., p. 18.
[514] Ibid.

unexplainably returning at the age of 12.[515] After her training, Margaret worked as a governess, and it was during this time that she had a profound spiritual experience whilst working for a rector in Ludlow, the result of which was that McMillan became a devout Christian for the rest of her life. McMillan wrote of the 'event' to a friend later in life:

> Then it came – the real event. Dear it is never an earthly event at all. I was in Ludlow in a rector's family teaching languages and music. Then one night – well it came. I knew what one called the Invisible Powers, that they are near us all, but reach us I think only after suffering – and prayer...I don't understand much. Can explain little – only that beyond these voices, there are others and the others matter most. And the ordinary person can be great, powerful – all powerful if he can get tuned to be the instrument of the unseen.[516]

During this time Rachel, also a Christian, was introduced to Socialism through a family member, which she in turn shared with McMillan. Both Christianity and Socialism were to have a strong influence on the two sisters' subsequent work.

Having become a Socialist, McMillan found it difficult to secure work as a governess in wealthy families due to her political beliefs. The essence of McMillan's Socialism was 'a better life for all',[517] and this proved to be a contradictory philosophy for a governess working for the elite. Nonetheless, McMillan did eventually find employment in London's Mayfair with Lady Meux. Lady Meux, a one time pantomime girl and barmaid, came to her position by marriage, and being 'rotten at spelling she wanted someone to act as a private secretary'.[518] Lady Meux found McMillan 'amusing',[519] but like any reader of McMillan's autobiography was confused regarding the obvious conflict between McMillan's political beliefs and her chosen occupation. McMillan reports Lady Meux as saying: 'You – how can you be a Socialist, and also – a – well – a governess?'[520] The simple fact was that it was not possible to make a

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[515] Cresswell, Darcy, *Margaret McMillan: A Memoir* (Hutchinson & Co, 1948), p. 28.
[516] Transcript of letter from McMillan to Mrs Sutcliffe, 1922 (University of Greenwich Archives).
[517] Bradburn, p. 26.
[518] Artley, Alexandra, 'The Children's Champion', *The Correspondent Magazine*, 25 February 1990, p. 42.
[519] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 46.
[520] Ibid., p. 45.

sustainable living from Socialist activities such as giving lectures and writing articles, and as she did not come from a wealthy family McMillan was forced to make a living in the only way she knew how. That McMillan should have accepted a post as a paid companion on a high salary in the centre of Mayfair for a Lady takes the conflict between McMillan's Socialist beliefs and her chosen employment to an extreme. The full irony of the situation has not been missed by commentators of McMillan's life, one of whom summed up the interview between Lady Meux and McMillan as being between, 'a semi-literate, immensely rich, fiercely Tory ex-tart and a penniless, Christian socialist gentlewoman despondently seeking work'.[521]

Lady Meux decided that McMillan should be trained as an actress, which she would finance and which at the time McMillan viewed as 'an attractive proposal',[522] and so McMillan undertook a training for the stage. It seems almost inevitable that eventually Socialism would come between McMillan and Lady Meux. Lady Meux gave McMillan an ultimatum of Socialism or her, and McMillan chose Socialism.

In 1893, shortly after leaving her employer, McMillan was invited to Bradford where, accompanied by Rachel, McMillan was to become a founder member and speaker for the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a political party that placed issues regarding children at the head of their political agenda. McMillan utilised her recent stage training, developing into an outstanding lecturer as well as a prolific writer.[523] During this time Rachel realised that McMillan's salary was not sufficient to support them both, and so Rachel decided to return to London and there train as a Sanitary Inspector[524] in order to finance both herself and McMillan.

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[521] Artley, p. 42.
[522] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 50.
[523] During her lifetime McMillan wrote over 400 books, pamphlets and articles. These are listed in the bibliography of Steedman, pp. 314-321.
[524] Although she trained as a Sanitary Inspector, Rachel subsequently became employed after her training as a travelling teacher of hygiene for Kent County Council.

It was whilst she was in Bradford that the ILP pushed McMillan forward to run for the Bradford School Board, for which she was marginally voted in. Thus, as the youngest and only woman on the Board, began McMillan's involvement with the education and lives of working-class children. McMillan described vividly her first visit to an elementary school in Bradford, where she saw 'Children in every stage of illness. Children with adenoids. Children with curvature. Children in every stage of neglect and dirt and suffering'.[525] Appalled and yet inspired by what she saw, McMillan spent the next eight years developing and demonstrating her passion for the rights of children, and in particular young children.

McMillan firmly believed that a child could not learn unless its physical needs were taken care of. Whilst she was in Bradford, McMillan was instrumental in creating the provision of regular medical inspections for all children and establishing Britain's first school clinic to treat children. She also campaigned for bathing facilities to be made available for children, for adequate ventilation to be provided in school buildings and for the abolition of the 'half-time' system whereby children of eleven and twelve would spend half their day and school and half working in a factory. McMillan's success was largely due to her determined character:

> She became a Terrible Nuisance, one of those beastly Agitators who are always bringing up awkward subjects and making decent people feel uncomfortable. And boards and committees finally agreed to do things she suggested, just to get rid of her.[526]

McMillan also became an authority on child education at this time through her work, visits to educational establishments abroad and extensive reading. In 1900 she published her first book, *Early Childhood,* which focused on infant education. It is clear from reading this book that McMillan was familiar with the concepts of many educational reformers including Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel and Edouard Seguin. Seguin, as shall be explored later, was to have a particular influence not only on

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[525] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 80.
[526] Priestly, J B, 'The Nuisance who Worked Miracles', *Daily Herald,* 27 June 1947.

McMillan's writing, but also in the educational philosophies she was to exercise in her own school.

In 1902, the Conservative Government's Educational Act abolished School Boards, placing their duties into the hands of County Councils, to which women could not be elected. After nine years in Bradford and eight on the School Board, McMillan was forced to resign and left Bradford to join Rachel in London, where she was now a travelling teacher of hygiene to mothers. McMillan was invited by the London County Council (LCC) to be a governor for several schools in Deptford, including Deptford Park.

Figure 131: Deptford Park School, Deptford (Source: Author's Photograph)

Deptford Park School was typical of school buildings at the time, which McMillan described as:

> The forbidding, heavy wall of our prison-like schools and its hard asphalt, its shadeless space and iron gates! You will no longer doubt that these last buildings and grounds have another origin. They were an outburst of the impulse that gave us, not lovely churches, but hideous factories and satanic mills.[527]

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[527] McMillan, Margaret, *What the Open Air Nursery School Is* (The Labour Party Publications Department, undated [circa 1923]), p. 4.

Having spent so long in Bradford, an industrial town, it is not surprising that McMillan should be struck by the similarities between such schools and the factories and mills that had surrounded her for nine years. For a Christian such as McMillan to describe the mills, which she likened to the schools, as 'satanic' is a clear illustration of how opposed McMillan was to the school environment that was provided for children at that time. Until the creation of nursery schools, the main educational option for working-class children under the age of five was in an infants' class of such an elementary school.

McMillan's role as governor to several Deptford schools introduced her to one of the poorest areas in London, which McMillan vividly described:

> The stained and tumbling walls, the dark, noisy courts, the crowded rooms, the sodden alleys all hidden behind roaring streets...Women who care no more. Girls whose youth is a kind of defiance. Children creeping on the filthy pavement, half-naked, unwashed and covered with sores.[528]

Appalled and yet impelled by what they saw, Rachel and McMillan decided to establish a health centre for the children of Deptford. Unable to secure funding from the Board of Education, their scheme was made possible by a wealthy sponsor.[529] The clinic was established in 1908 in a school, before transferring to a house a few years later; a move made possible by another sponsor putting a property, Evelyn House, at their disposal. Thousands of children were treated each year, but the sisters grew frustrated at curing a child only to have them return a few weeks later with the same ailment, as illustrated by McMillan:

> Let me give you one example. In the three last months of 1913 our nurse treated 950 cases of skin disease. Within the same period 927 of these returned, after being cured, to have the same kind of disease treated by drug and lotion. Hundreds come back five and even six times within twelve months. Of what use is all this labour and expense? Who is benefited by it?[530]

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[528] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 103.
[529] The sponsor was Joseph Fels, and American who made his fortune from the manufacture of soap.
[530] McMillan, Margaret, *The Camp School* (George Allen & Unwin, 1927), p. 49.

Rachel and McMillan realised that rather than simply temporarily curing the children, they had to treat the cause of the ailments. They identified that the children visiting them were tired due to lack of sleep caused by the overcrowded conditions of their homes, lacking access to fresh air and were dirty and malnourished. They therefore opened a 'Camp School' in the back garden of Evelyn House which provided overnight accommodation for a number of girls aged six to fourteen (Figure 132). The girls had an evening bath, slept outside and were fed a wholesome breakfast in the morning before going to school. The scheme was so successful that they repeated it with a camp for boys, utilising a local churchyard for their purpose (Figure 133).

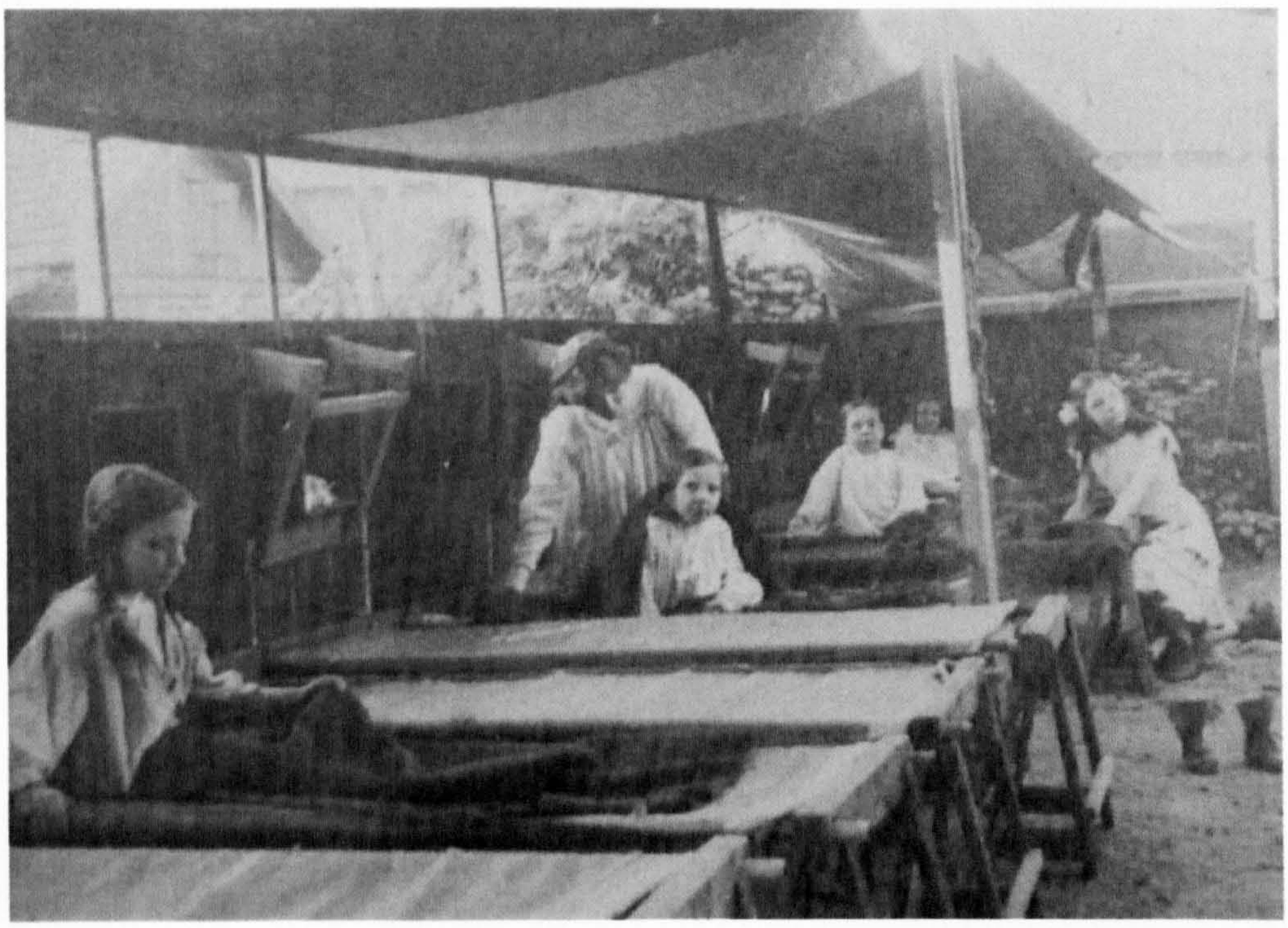

Figure 132: Girls in Camp at Evelyn House (Source: University of Greenwich Archives); note the awnings which provide shelter from wet weather.

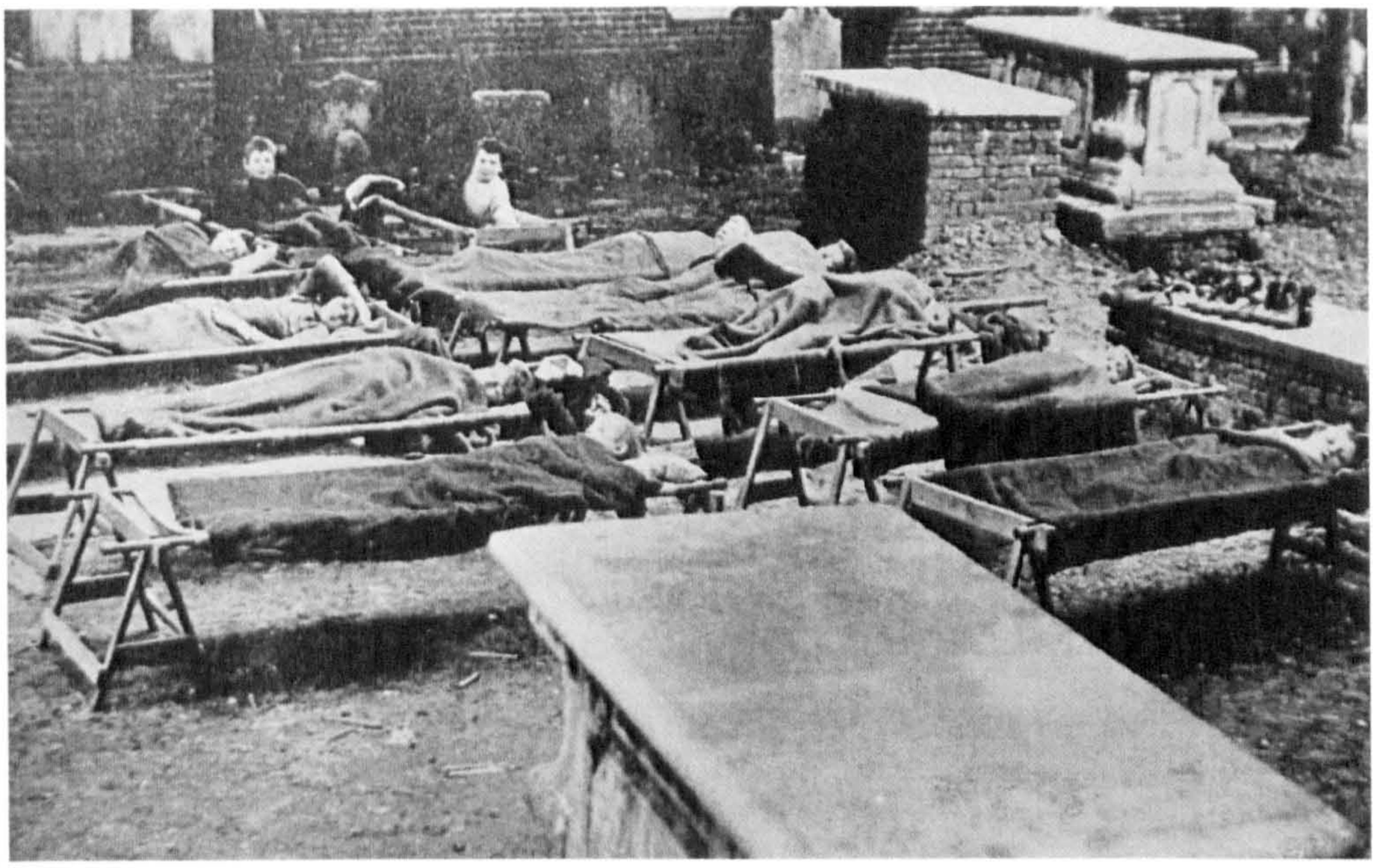

Figure 133: Boys Camp at St Nicholas' Churchyard (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

Even at this stage, gardening was incorporated into the boys' day. A newspaper article in the *Daily Mirror* records that the boys grew vegetables, and also that each child had their own garden in the churchyard.[531]

Whilst the scheme clearly benefited the boys' health, it attracted complaints because it was situated in a graveyard, and even the sisters 'felt that it was a kind of desecration to be there'.[532] Consequently the sisters were forced to find alternative accommodation for the boys, which they successfully did. Gardening continued to be part of the boys' curriculum and a former student at the school recalls that

> after some time Miss McMillan succeeded in getting a field in Watergate Street for allotments for the boys. She bought the seeds and grew vegetables (Miss McMillan was then a vegetarian). She helped with the digging and planting. They were all very thrilled when the first bunch of spring onions were ready for eating – they had them for tea.[533]

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[531] Anon, 'Churchyard as Dormitory', *Daily Mirror,* 11 June 1914, p. 4.
[532] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan,* p. 125.
[533] Recollections of Mrs Siggear, former student at Rachel McMillan Training College from University of Greenwich McMillan Archives, p. 1.

Having established camp schools for both the girls and boys, it was a natural progression that McMillan, who had written on nursery education, and Rachel, who had much experience of the care of young children, should develop their work by providing facilities for younger children.

5.3 The Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School

By the time that Rachel and McMillan created their open-air nursery school in London's Deptford in 1914, open-air schools had been established in the Capital for several years. However, it is highly questionable as to how much the McMillan sisters were influenced by this movement and how much of their own characters, experience and knowledge contributed to what seems an inevitable enterprise, regardless of the pre-existence of open-air schools. As has been explored, McMillan had a passion for nature which was established in early childhood. Through her experiences in the schools of Bradford and Deptford she had been exposed to the appalling health and educational facilities available to children. McMillan's Christian and Socialist beliefs, which she shared with Rachel, were developed before she became involved with education and created a further impetus for her work, as highlighted by one of her biographers:

> Margaret McMillan's educational reforms cannot be separated from either her Christianity or her Socialism, for her educational innovations were no more than the route she took towards her main objective – the fulfilment of individuals and the creation of a new society.[534]

McMillan's determined character, together with her strong Christian and Socialist beliefs compelled her to take action to remedy the current situation. McMillan also had extensive academic abilities, which are evident in her fluency in German and French, allowing her not only access to the original transcripts of influential child educational reformers, but also suggesting that she had a mind capable of forming and implementing her own educational philosophy:

> Margaret's intellectual powers were as tough and rigorous as her physical constitution. She was a brilliant linguist, a student of child psychology and something of an expert in applied psychology. She had an inquiring mind and when studying any subject she did it with great thoroughness. She was a tireless collector of facts and rarely accepted any statement at its face value. When making an educational experiment she consulted the writings of various authorities, measured their suggestions against her

[534] Bradburn, p. 29.

> own practical experience, considered the matter carefully and finally produced something astonishingly original – a scheme which often became a prototype.[535]

There was one final factor that contributed to the sisters' work, and that was the area with which they had unintentionally become involved. Deptford was one of the most densely populated areas of London, with seventy-two people per acre, compared with twenty-six in nearby Greenwich and twenty-five in Lewisham.[536] Furthermore, Deptford was divided into North, East, South and West wards and the East ward was the most densely populated with 131 people per acre. It was here that the sisters created their clinic, camp schools and nursery. Low wages, large families, intermittent employment and unsanitary conditions were rife, as were drinking and gambling. [537] The infant mortality rate of the East ward in 1910 was 189 per 1,000; over double that of the adjoining West ward.[538] The factors for this alarmingly high rate are easy to identify. The decline in the shipping industry caused high unemployment in the area which resulted in low income. For example, one widowed mother of six that McMillan met worked for twenty-two hours a day at home sewing buttonholes to earn 10 shillings a week. This was less than half the minimum living expenditure that B Seebohm Rowntree had identified as sustainable for a family of five living in York in 1901.[539] This was by no means an isolated incident. In his study, Rowntree also identified that some 30.7% of London's population was living in poverty.[540] A low income meant that only the cheapest accommodation could be rented, often a single room for an entire family. The consequence of such overcrowding was a lack of sleep, poor standards of hygiene and the spread of disease. If a child survived to the age of five, then they would receive some warmth, shelter and food at school, but for those under the age of five there was no respite from the squalid living conditions of their homes except the street. Hitherto, the education

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[535] Ibid., p. 22.
[536] Ibid., p. 36.
[537] Bradburn, pp. 42-43.
[538] Ibid., p. 37.
[539] Rowntree, B Seebohm, *A Study of Town Life* (Macmillan & Co, 1901 [Reference from 1902 Edition]), p. 296
[540] Ibid., p. 299.

of children under the age of five had been conducted in either infant classes in the elementary school or private nurseries (such as the Froebel-inspired *kindergartens* created in London from the mid-nineteenth century) based in a house with little or no garden.[541] However, in 1905, Article 53 of the Education Code required that those under the age of five should be removed from the infant classes of elementary schools, and this accounted for the large number of young children McMillan saw playing in the gutters of Deptford. This 'sudden lack of educational provision for under-fives is likely to have influenced McMillan to move towards the development of the 'Baby Camp' and later the 'Nursery School".[542]

There are two separate accounts as to how the camps already established for older children developed into the nursery school. The first relates that one of the girls at the Girls' Camp said that she wished her little sister could come to the Camp.[543] The second claims that Rachel felt despair at the ailments of the older children and realised that many of these could be avoided if the sisters were able to take in younger children.[544] Which source is true is impossible to say, and it may be that it was a combination of both. Regardless, in 1914 the McMillan sisters opened The Baby Camp which was to develop RMOANS by 1917 in Deptford, one of London's most deprived and built up areas.

The plot on which the McMillans built their nursery had been earmarked as a potential site for a new elementary school in the area, but the recent decline in the birth-rate resulted in these plans being put on hold. The LCC rented the land and house to the McMillans for a shilling a year, with an agreement stating that the LCC could cancel the tenure at a day's notice and that no permanent buildings could be erected on the site.

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[541] Bradburn, p. 82.
[542] Steele, J (ed), *The Children Can't Wait: The McMillan Sisters and the Birth of Nursery Education* (Deptford Forum Publishing Ltd 1999), p. 13.
[543] Lowndes, GAN, *Margaret McMillan: 'The Children's Champion'* (Museum Press, 1960), p. 74.
[544] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 139.

A plan of the original LCC proposed school site exists and gives some indication of the area the sisters had at their disposal (Figure 134).

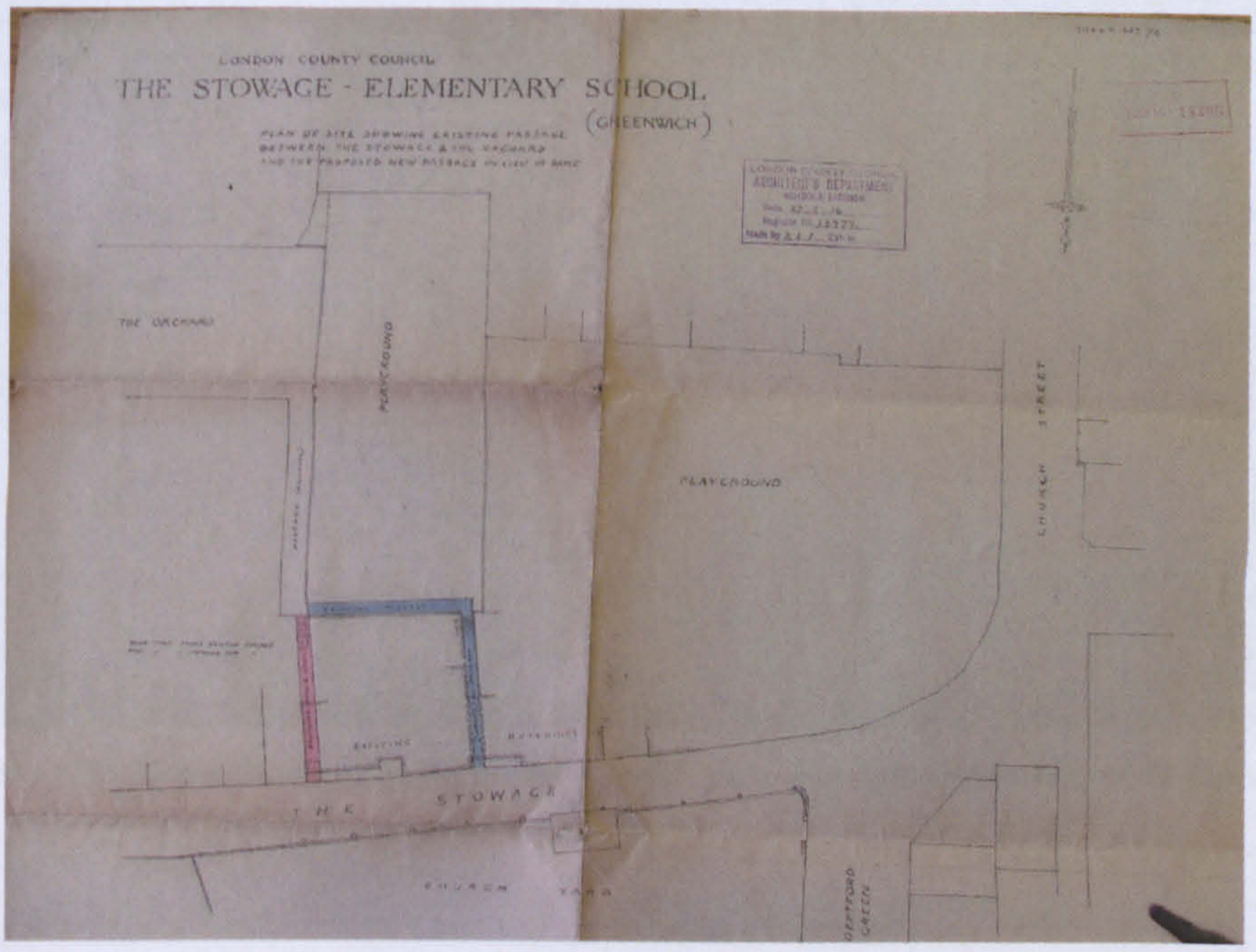

Figure 134: Plan of proposed site of The Stowage Elementary School by LCC, 1916 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives), illustrating the blank canvas of the site.

This plan illustrates that the site was essentially a blank canvas on which the sisters could design a school and garden in accordance with their developing educational philosophies. The garden was almost an acre, although when they first took on the site it was 'a big waste of stones, of brick bats and tin cans strewn over an acre of earth all rough and covered with wild growths and half withered grasses'.[545] This large garden area was to prove key to the whole project, and there is no doubt 'to her [McMillan] the nursery garden was the real teaching area'.[546]

Characteristically ignoring the condition set out by the LCC, once the site was cleared the first of the 'shelters' was built. McMillan was ill at the time of the setting up of the nursery school, and this was one of several periods in her life when she was literally left exhausted from her work. Consequently it fell to Rachel to oversee and design the lay-out of the nursery and particularly the shelters. These were 'Light and fair...and

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[545] McMillan, *The Nursery School* (Dent & Sons, 1919: note that reference is also made to the 1930 edition and this is indicated where necessary), p. 347.
[546] Bradburn, p. 83.

planned to give complete shelter in all weathers and to catch the sunshine'.[547] The shelters were, by necessity, strong, simple erections that were cheap to build and maintain. Their purpose was to offer the children well-ventilated shelter in inclement weather and also to house the bathing and cooking facilities that the sisters felt to be so necessary to their concept of nursery education. Although it has not been possible to source an original plan of the first shelter, McMillan stated that Rachel's original design had 'so far as I can see now, no mistakes..this shelter has stood the test of many years and is the original of many others'.[548] The shelter was oblong, to allow the children indoor 'running space'[549] and south-facing to afford maximum sunlight through the half glass south wall with a sliding door. The roof was made from asbestos, whilst the building walls were created from Poelite, a fireproof composition that was a soft grey colour. With the veranda to the front of the building, it is not difficult to see that the inspiration for the building, in both design and colour, almost certainly came from the American childhood home of the sisters. Assuming, as McMillan stated, that the design of the original shelter was the basis for many others, a plan of a later shelter gives an indication of how the first and subsequent shelters were constructed (Figure 135).

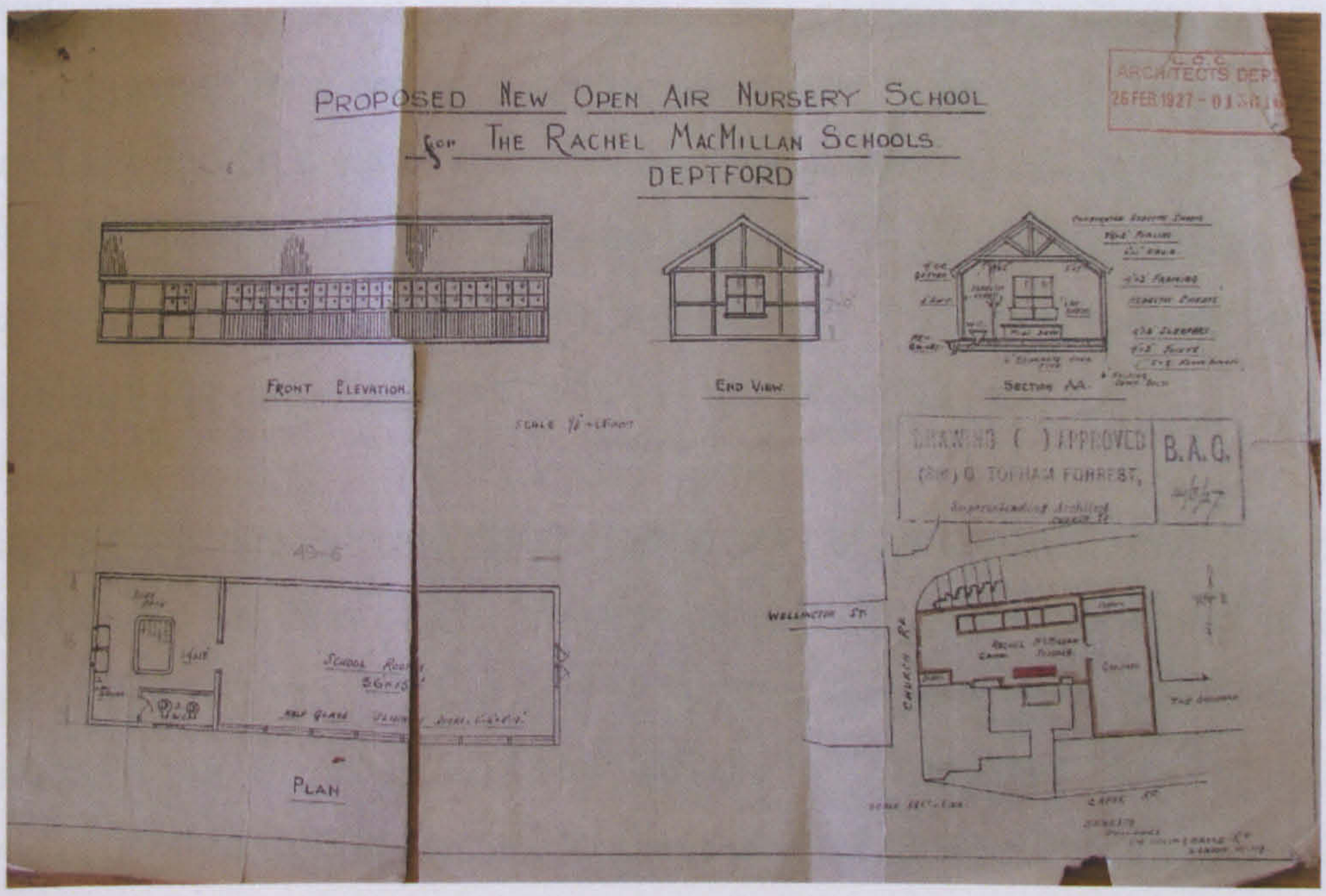

Figure 135: Plan of shelters at RMOANS, 1927 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives)

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[547] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 348.
[548] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 141.
[549] Ibid., p. 142.

The school was designed on a very practical basis to compensate for the shortcomings of the children's home environments. The children were dirty, and so the school shelters contained bathrooms in which each child would be bathed every morning by their teacher or her helper. Each child was supplied with their own towel and toothbrush, a luxury at a time when some families shared a toothbrush (Figure 136).

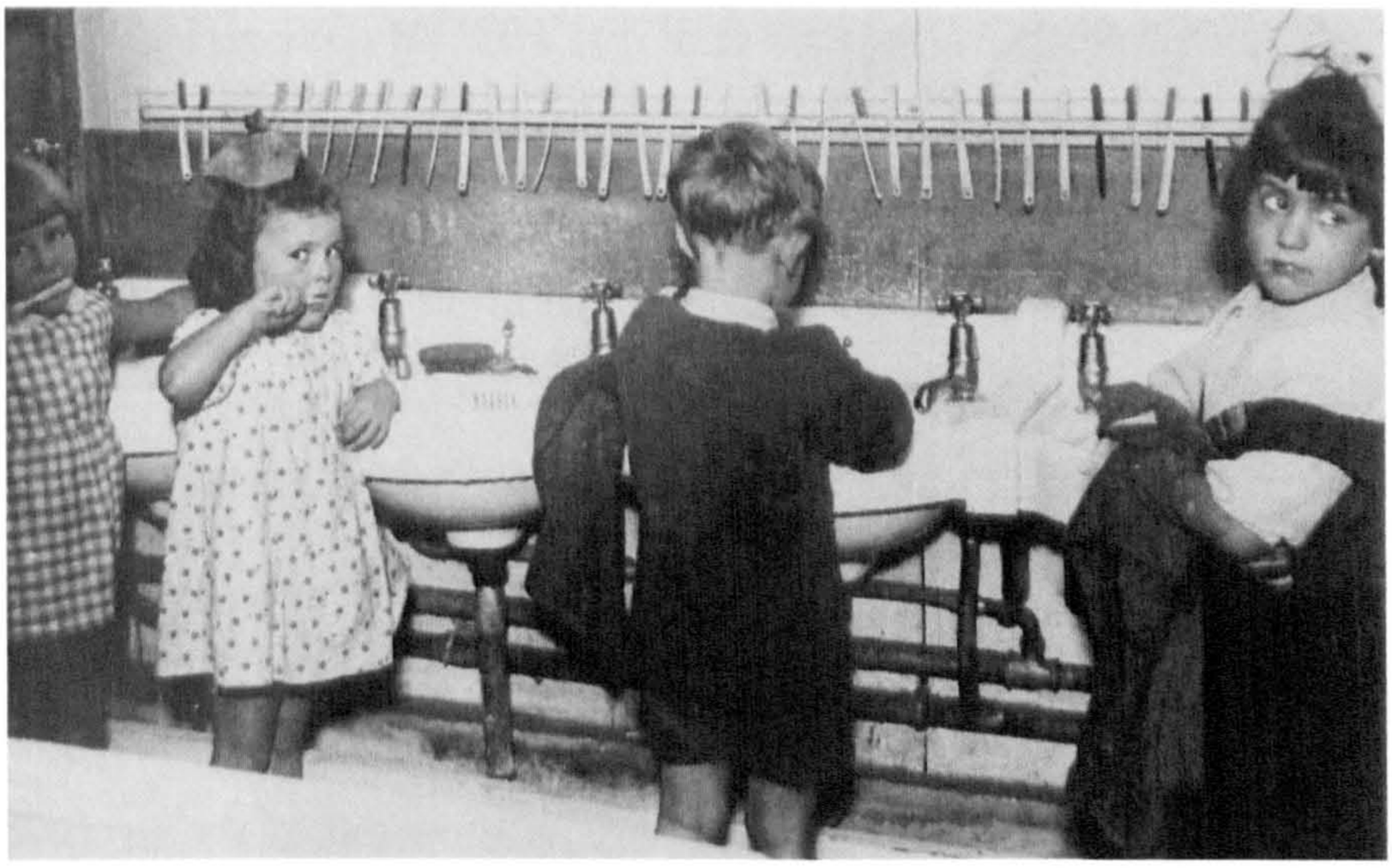

Figure 136: Children using one of the specially designed bathrooms at the RMOANS circa 1933 (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

As a result of the extreme poverty experienced by the children's families, most of the children's own clothes were inevitably dirty and shabby (Figure 137)

Figure 137: Bill, Sam and John Woolley as they came to the Camp School, photographed by Mary Peet, Student c. 1920s (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

The McMillans dealt with the dirty children in the same way they dealt with the other shortcomings in their pupil's lives: they simply provided the children with what they needed. The children were given simple but colourful clean clothes that they would then be changed into after their bath at the nursery (Figure 138).

Figure 138: Children wearing clothing supplied by at the RMOANS (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

For McMillan the children's clean, brightly coloured clothing appears to have had a symbolic as well as practical purpose. She often likened her children to flowers, and commented that in their 'pretty toilette..the children are at last in harmony with Nature's own scheme, gay as butterflies or the blossoms that greet the sun'.[550]

A further consequence of the poverty of Deptford was that many of the children attending the RMAONS were often hungry and malnourished, and so the school provided three nourishing meals a day. As well as offering a pro-active solution to the problem of nutrition faced by the children, McMillan also used mealtimes as an educational opportunity. The children served their fellow classmates and McMillan believed this encouraged a sense of community within the school (Figure 139). McMillan also regarded the correct placing of crockery and cutlery by the children as a prerequisite to reading skills.

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[550] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 60.

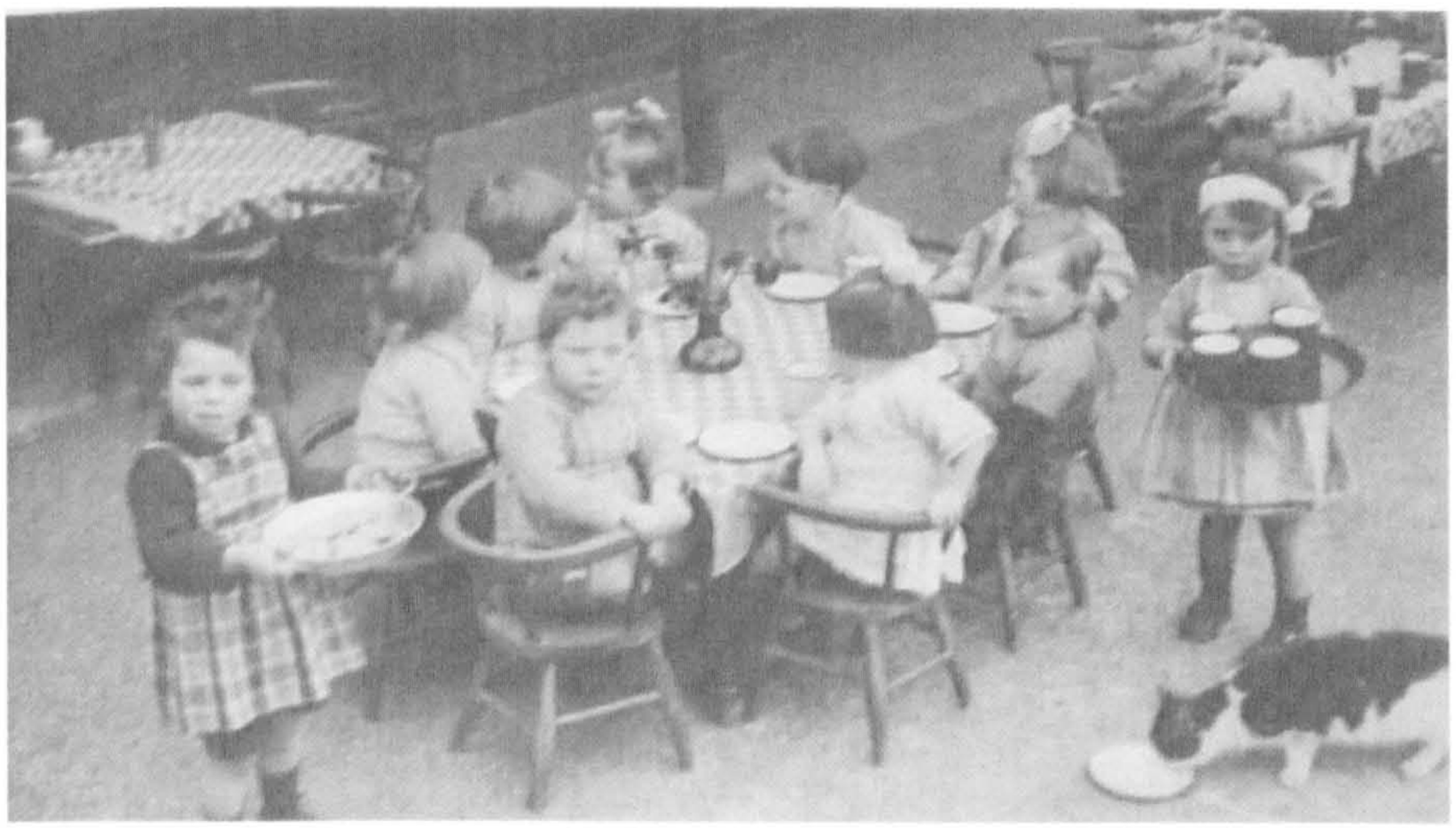

Figure 139: Children having lunch at RMOANS (Source: McMillan Archives at Lewisham Library). The two girls on either side of the table are serving their fellow pupils.

Another consequence of the area's poverty was that many of the children lived with their families in one-roomed tenements that served as living room, kitchen and bedroom, where the entire family often slept in one bed. With the average number of children in a family being five, overcrowding was clearly a problem. Figure 140, taken by one of McMillan's later teacher trainees in the 1920s, depicts a typical Deptford family; all of whom lived in one room.

Figure 140: Typical family from RMOANS living in one room taken by Mary Peet, student teacher at RMOANS c. 1920s (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

Living in such cramped conditions meant that most of the children attending the RMOANS were exhausted from a lack of sleep caused by over-populated beds and constant noise and interruptions to their sleep. To remedy this, the school insisted that each child take a sleep after their main meal (Figure 141).

Figure 141: Children at RMOANS preparing for mid-day sleep (Source: McMillan Archives at Lewisham Library)

The McMillans were insistent on personally knowing every child's family and visiting their homes and they encouraged their later student teachers to do the same:

> Our students have to know their new neighbours. They have to get some idea of housing, of the cost of food, and the needs of a family who live always on the brink of a financial precipice! They must not turn their eyes away from the horrors of a bad neighbourhood, just as a nurse may not flinch near the battle-front or in the hospital.[551]

Through their involvement with the local community, the McMillan sisters were able to clearly identify the problems that the children had and therefore take logical steps to do what they could to remedy this. The result was that they created facilities and an environment in their nursery

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[551] Ibid., p. 179.

school that was in stark contrast to that outside the school walls. A visitor to the school described this contrast:

> As I walked down the whole length of Church Street I was profoundly shocked and depressed by what I saw – the squalid poverty, the dilapidated buildings, the sickly children playing listlessly in the street; there were women nursing babies on their doorsteps and men lounging against walls. Then I came to the tall wooden gate of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School Training Centre, and passed through it to what seemed to me a veritable paradise. The contrast was overwhelming. A beautiful spacious garden, trees, grass, flowers, sunshine and brilliant colour lifted up my heart and dispelled depression. The whole place seemed to be swarming with happy, healthy little children all dressed in bright coloured overalls of every hue.[552]

Only once the children were clean, fed and rested did McMillan feel they would be able to benefit from education. McMillan's interest in education was developed long before she opened the nursery school, through both her training as a governess and her later involvement with the School Boards and her extensive reading and research on the subject of education.

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[552] Lowndes, p. 80.

5.4 Influences on McMillan's Educational Theories

McMillan's theories were in large part developed through her own personality, for example her love of nature and her professional career. However, McMillan was also clearly influenced by a number of educational theorists whose work she researched, admired and most importantly developed. Scanning through McMillan's books and articles, it is obvious that she read widely; and her linguistic talents ensured that she not only read English books on education but also German and French. McMillan makes particular reference to Edouard Seguin as one of her main influences, from whom her 'theory and practice alike owe much, if not all, of their original impulse'.[553]

The French physiologist and psychologist, Edouard Seguin (1812-80) is particularly noted for his work with mentally deficient children who had formally been regarded as ineducable. Education for those with 'special needs' was in its infancy at the time he began his work, and owed much to the work of Jean Itard (1775-1838) under whom Sequin started his training in this field. Itard is regarded as a founding father of special education as he was one of the first to attempt to educate deaf and dumb children. Itard believed that all knowledge comes through the senses and therefore his educational techniques focused on sensory training. Educating through the senses was not a new concept, and Itard was almost certainly in turn influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) who is often credited for establishing many of the ideas that contributed to progressive education in the twentieth century.[554]

Rousseau embodied the theories of the eighteenth century intellectual movement known as the Age of Enlightenment, which sought to understand the world through science and reason as opposed to religion. Rousseau's most famous work, *Emile*, is a fictional account of the ideal education of a child from birth to adulthood and marriage. *Emile* put forward the argument that a child was fundamentally good but could be

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[553] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 12.
[554] Lawton and Gordon, *Western Educational Ideas* (Woburn Press, 2002).

corrupted by society. In *Emile* Rousseau advocated that education should be child-centred as opposed to teacher-centred and that that education should centre on the senses which the child could develop by interacting with their natural environment. The impact of *Emile* on both parents and educationalists was immediate and by the end of the century his influence 'reverberated throughout the Western World'.[555] Rousseau's theories were purely academic, and although later educationalists such as Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782-1852) would utilise his theories into their practical work with working class and young children respectively, it was Itard who saw the potential for using these techniques in his work with deaf and dumb children.

Having worked under Itard for two years, Seguin adopted and developed Itard's 'sensory' techniques to educate the mentally retarded, a group he believed to be more pitied than those who were deaf and dumb.[556] In so doing, 'Edouard Seguin fitted into a succession of teachers and physicians whose work was characterized by a concern for individuals. The concern was expressed by a search for methods of improving the functioning of those individuals, whether by education or medical treatment'.[557] Through the foundation of his school for the mentally retarded in 1837, Seguin provided free educational opportunities for one of the lowest and poorest sectors of French society.

Seguin placed great emphasis on the physical setting of the school, the children's clothing, their food, and the importance of fresh air and exercise. Whilst he initially used gymnastic equipment to exercise the children, he later preferred other instruments, 'the spade, the wheelbarrow, the wateringpot [sic], the bow, the wooden horse, the hammer, the bell are greater favourites with us than the general

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[555] Palmer, Joy (Ed), *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education* (Routledge, 2001), p. 58.
[556] Talbot, Mabel, *Edouard Seguin* (Teachers College Press, 1964 [reference from 1966 edition), p. 4 (quoting Edouard Seguin, *Hygiène et education des idiots* (Paris, J B Baillière, 1843 p. 2).
[557] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

gymnastics whose instruments are to be used sparingly',[558] and encouraged the children to further develop physically by participating in walks, scrambling over rough terrain, marching and dancing.[559] Seguin also used the grounds of his school to encourage the children to produce gravel paths and vegetable gardens. To develop the senses, Seguin provided the children with experiences that included smelling flowers and looking for colours and shapes in flowers, pebbles or sticks. Interestingly, Seguin excluded younger children from his school, as he felt they would learn better at home from their mothers.[560]

Like Froebel, the creator of *kindergartens,* Seguin preferred to employ women in his schools. Froebel's employment of women was borne of his frustration at the negative response he got from male educators to his educational ideas for pre-school children. Froebel turned to women and in so doing opened up the profession of teaching to women. Seguin had a preference for employing women in his schools for the simple reason that 'he felt that women were more apt than men to love children'.[561] Seguin also expected his teachers to respect the individuality of the children, particularly by paying close observation to each pupil and creating an individual learning programme appropriate for that child.

It is not difficult to see striking similarities between Seguin's basic educational theories and McMillan's. Both were concerned with providing an educational opportunity for a neglected section of society, emphasising the importance of educating through the senses, utilising women teachers and a belief in the importance of the physical environment on their pupils. Central to McMillan's inspiration for creating the school was a desire to prevent the causes of the children's later illness, and for Seguin, 'as his work progressed, his interest turned more and more to questions of causes and possible preventative measures'.[562]

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[558] Ibid., p. 94 (quoting Edouard Seguin, *Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (New York, William Wood and Company, 1866 p. 34).
[559] Ibid., p. 95.
[560] Ibid., pp. 105-6.
[561] Ibid., p. 107.
[562] Ibid., p. 12.

However, just as Seguin developed the theories of Itard, so McMillan adapted the theories of Seguin and others:

> There is a need, first of all, of training [ie the education of children]. What kind of training? Are we to turn to Spencer or Herbart, Froebel or Seguin? Who is to be the supreme guide and teacher? We answer, "All of these," in the sense that we may learn something from each. None of these in the sense we should follow any one of them blindly. Our task is new. It has never before been attempted.[563]

Although Seguin certainly utilised the garden as an educational concept, it was McMillan who realised the full potential of the garden for the education of nursery-school children. For to McMillan, 'The garden is the essential matter. Not the lessons, or the pictures, or the talk. The lessons and talk are about things seen and done in the garden'.[564]

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[563] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, pp. 173-174.
[564] Ibid. p. 2 [1930 Edition].

5.5 The Garden at The Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School

The RMOANS was set on a site of approximately one acre. It is frustrating that no detailed plans or photographs of the entire garden appear to survive. Although a plan of 1851 gives some clues to what was contained within the garden, it fails to provide an overall layout of the gardens (Figure 142).

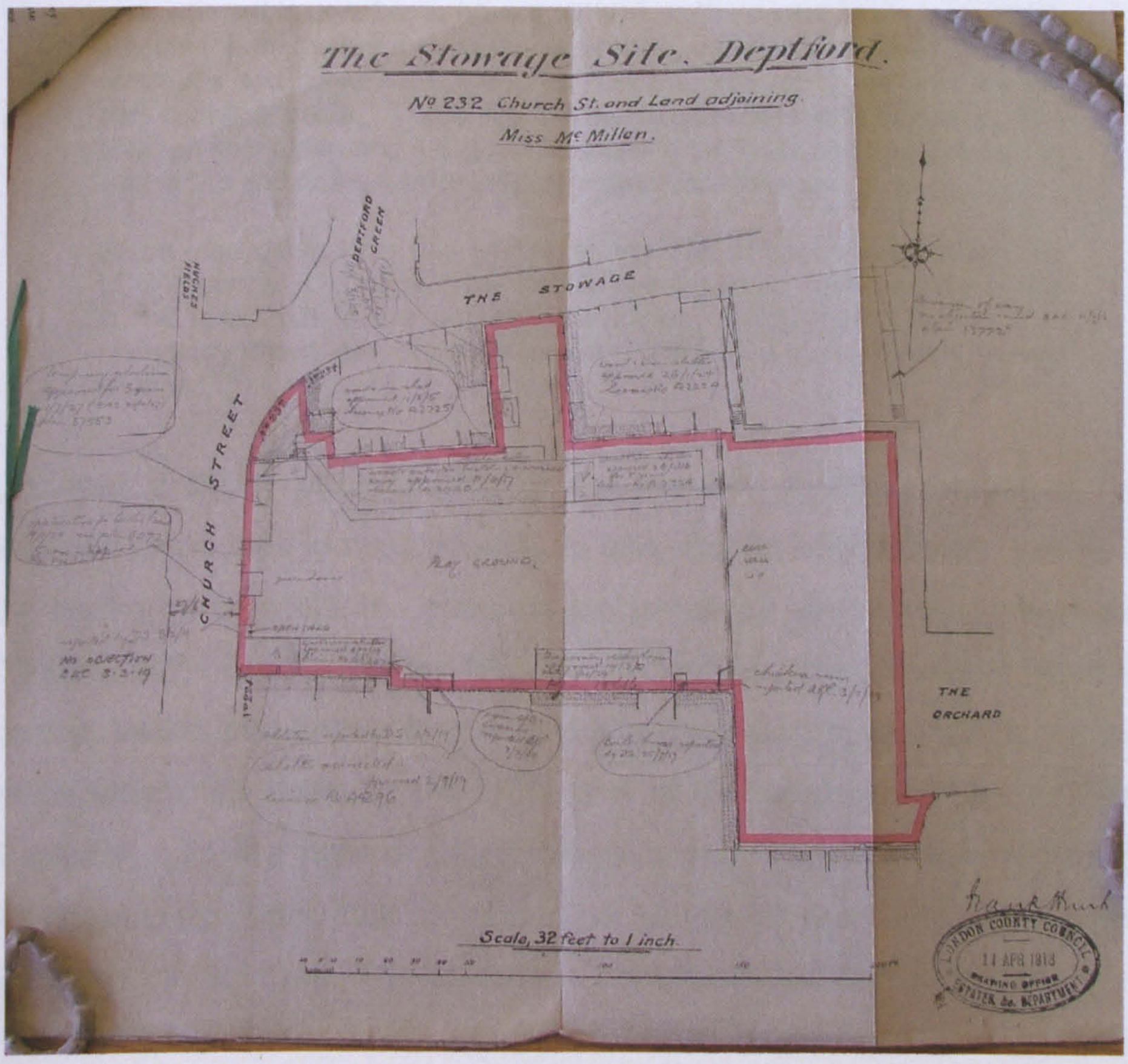

Figure 142: Plan of RMOANS, 1918 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives) illustrating the location of features such as the chicken-run, greenhouse and pigeon lofts but not the layout of the gardens.

It is, however, possible to build up a picture of the garden through archival material and the many references McMillan gives in her books, *The Camp School* and *The Nursery School*.

A record book written by Pearl Ackerman, a student nursery teacher at Goldsmith's College, University of London who visited the RMOANS on 7th October 1924, gives a good overview of the garden:

> There is a well kept garden in the centre. The garden is a wonderful place. At the top where we came in, there is an asphalt playground for wet weather, when it is too damp on the grass for toddlers' feet. Here is a rockery, and a dear little shelter hollowed in concrete with wee seats inside where the babies can keep house.
>
> At the bottom of the first shelter is a huge space enclosed by a very low wall, where it is possible to have a sandpit. In the centre of the lawn which adjoins the asphalt is a delightful dovecote, and aviary of canaries. Beds of shrubs and flowers are here too. On the right along the wall are the rest of the animals. There are guinea pigs, rabbits and chickens. The children love these and it is good for them to be there. A huge tree by the wall at the end of the garden affords shade from the sun.
>
> Steps lead down from this garden to the part of the nursery which the LCC supports. Opposite to the shelter is a big lawn. In the middle of this is the latest gift to the nursery, the Jungle Jim Climber....where it is necessary there are concrete paths. This is a convenience in wet weather.[565]

Undated archival photographs of the garden illustrate some of the features mentioned in this account. In one, the rockery is clearly visible in the background, whilst the concrete paths can be seen in the foreground (Figure 143), whilst another (Figure 144) shows the dovecote right of centre, and a little further to the right is a doorway beyond which are the steps which led down to the LCC part of the nursery, known as 'The Meadow'. To the right of the doorway is the large tree referred to by Ackerman, and one must suppose that on the far right, just out of view, would be the animals. The lawns and flowerbeds are clearly evident.

[565] Student notebook for Pearl Ackerman held at The University of Greenwich McMillan Archives.

Figure 143: Garden at the RMOANS (Source: University of Greenwich Archives) illustrating the rockery and concrete paths in the garden.

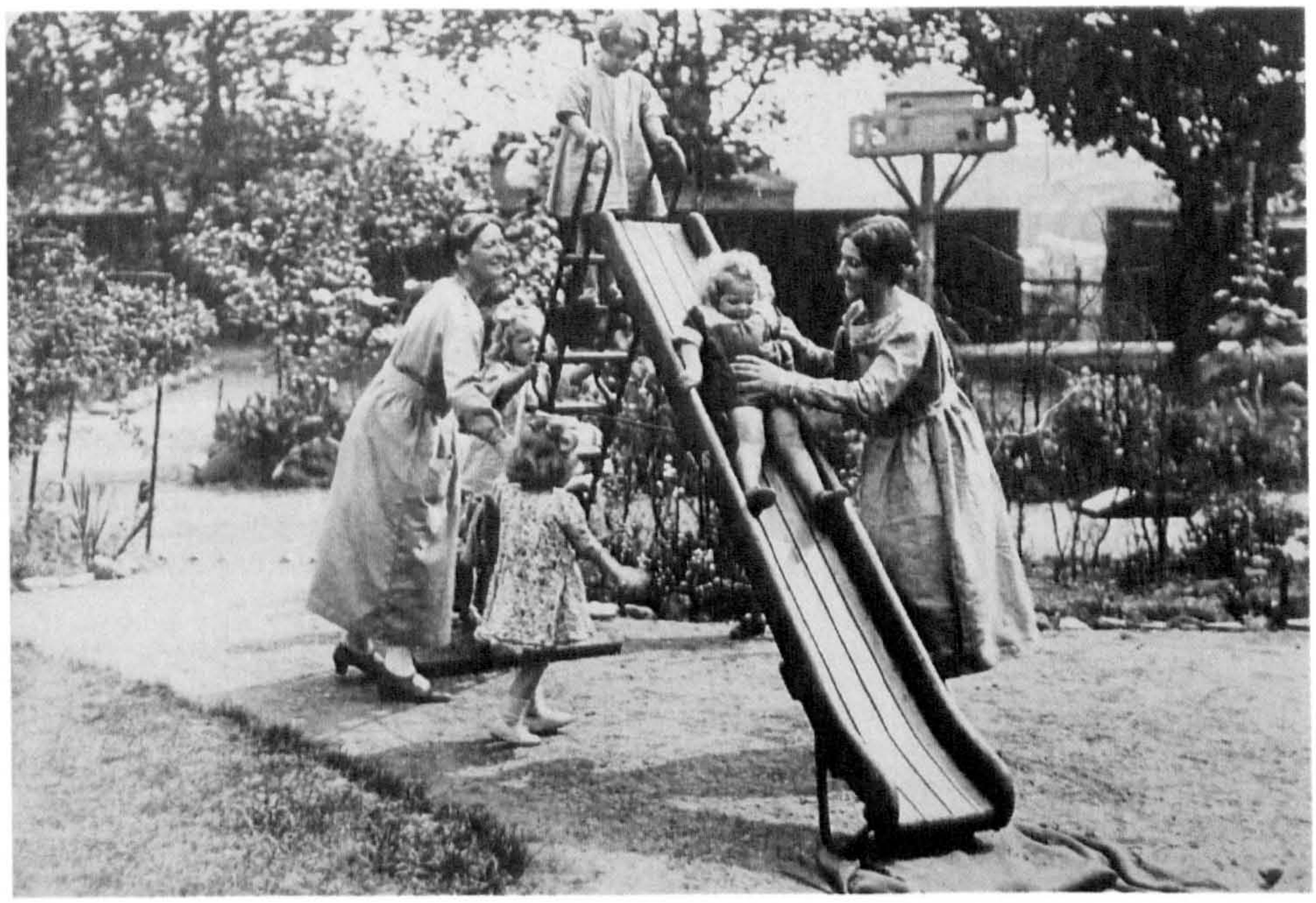

Figure 144: Garden at the RMOANS (facing East) (Source: University of Greenwich McMillan Archives), featuring the dovecote, lawns and flowerbeds.

In *The Nursery School* McMillan makes reference to garden structures and features suitable for the nursery garden, such as walls for training fruit, a greenhouse, a herb garden, terraces, sandpits, jumping-off steps, a lawn, a flower garden, a tool shed and even a rubbish heap.[566] McMillan also provides specific referencing to the planting of the garden

[566] McMillan, *The Nursery School* , pp. 44-49.

at the RMOANS. She records that 'there are at least twenty different orders of tree, mulberry, plane, lime, chestnut, sycamore, aspen, poplar and many orders of fruit tree'.[567] In *The Camp School* McMillan refers to an herb garden containing fennel, mint, lavender, sage, marjoram, thyme, rosemary, herb gerarrd and rue.[568] McMillan also gives a detailed account of the roses contained within the garden, indicating they had a major presence in the garden:

> Of all the Hybrid Teas, the lovely Madame Edouard Heriot, which I believed to be fitted only to the highest class order of gardens, has bloomed most freely and kindly. Not one of all our Hybrid Teas has refused to bloom – Madame Ravary, Madame Lambert, Lady Hillingdon, Gustav Grunerwald, Hon. Edith Gifford, Mrs. Foley Hobbs, Mrs. Herbert Stevens, Lady Roberts, Catherine Mermet, Anna Oliver, Madame Edouard Heriet [sic], Lady Ashtown, J. P. Clark, George Dickson, Petite Maman Cochet, Abel Chatenay, and Souvenir de Pierre Notting – not one of them sulked. And they are so low-growing, just tall enough for toddlers![569]

Further references to the planting is made, which included geraniums, daisies, virginia stock, sweet peas, beans, ivy, cabbage and a patch of lawn for the children on which to run and take their mid-day sleep. McMillan's preference was for large splashes of colour, particularly delphiniums, larkspurs, roses, nasturtiums and zinnias, and this would certainly have influenced the layout of the garden. Once, in her absence, the gardener, Mrs Hambledon, planted the geraniums singly, rather than *en masse*, as she would have preferred. Feeling disappointed about this McMillan remarked on her return, 'It looks as though the garden has measles'.[570]

There are at least two direct references to Mrs Hambledon in McMillan's *The Nursery School.* This thick volume 'was written in response to a desire expressed by many people in every part of the country for some help of guidance in the starting of Nursery-Schools',[571] and referred heavily to the RMOANS. Despite her own strong interest in nature and

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[567] McMillan, 'Garden Nursery Schools', *The World's Health,* April 1928, p. 4.
[568] McMillan, *The Camp School*, p. 63.
[569] Ibid., p. 64.
[570] Lowndes, p. 42.
[571] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 7 (preface).

the educational potential of the garden, McMillan twice credits Mrs Hambledon in this text with having created the garden at the RMOANS. McMillan states that Mrs Hambledon 'has made of our garden and meadow a place where education is going on all the time'[572] and later, claims that it was 'Mrs Hambledon who made the first Nursery-School garden, and did it entirely as a labour of love'.[573]

It is difficult to believe that McMillan would have left the construction of the garden, which she regarded as key to the education of her pupils, to the gardener. It is of course possible that Mrs Hambledon constructed the garden under the instructions of McMillan. It is also possible that McMillan's generous accreditation of Mrs Hambledon as creator of the garden was inspired more by McMillan's gratitude to Mrs Hambledon's sister, Mary Chignell, who became Principal of the RMOANS in 1917, 'at a time of much sorrow and stress',[574] namely the death of Rachel. In addition to the claims that Mrs Hambledon created the garden, there is also a brief reference to another creator of the garden. In *The Camp School* McMillan states that, 'The Vacant Lot Cultivation people are making a kind of show allotment of the garden'.[575] It is interesting to note that John Fels was the sponsor of the Vacant Lot Cultivation Association (VLCA) and it was he who liaised with the LCC to secure the new site of the nursery school for the McMillans in 1914. However, by 1929 a reminiscence by a former student teacher relates that between 1929 and 1931 there was no gardener at all, 'No indeed there weren't [gardeners]. The students did it [gardening], we did everything'.[576]

The creation of the garden, therefore, appears to be an amalgamation of the work of the VLCA from 1914 to circa. 1917, Mrs Hambledon from circa. 1917, and the student teachers from 1918. It is likely that all of these worked under the direction of McMillan, who, due to the high

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[572] Ibid., p. 262.
[573] Ibid., p. 353.
[574] Ibid., p. 352.
[575] McMillan, *The Camp School*, p. 52.
[576] Llewellyn Jones, Winifred, *Reminisces of the Rachel McMillan Training College and of Margaret McMillan* (unprinted document, held at McMillan Archives, University of Greenwich).

emphasis she placed on the educational benefits of the garden and her own evident gardening expertise, would certainly have had strong ideas as to how the garden should be laid out to maximise its educational potential. McMillan used the garden extensively in the mental, physical and social educational development of the children.

To educate the children mentally, McMillan utilised the garden to stimulate the senses of even the youngest children at the RMOANS. The visual sense of the babies at the nursery was stimulated by the nurses purposefully moving the children's cots around the garden, so that 'His vague and wandering gaze is arrested, it may be, by the bright foliage of a rose-bush; or the tossing green of the privet hedge fixes it for a moment'.[577]

As the child grew older his sense of smell was developed through the herb garden, which McMillan regarded as being fundamental to the RMOANS. Many children coming to the nursery initially suffered from sinus and nasal blockages, but simple medical treatment and the regular use of 'Handkerchief Drills' enabled such children to smell properly for the first time. The herb beds were an ideal way to educate and exercise the newly cleared sinuses, '...we have planted fennel, mint, lavender, sage, marjoram, thyme, rosemary, herb gerrard and rue...We have balm, indeed, everywhere, in our garden'.[578] The herbs would also have developed the sense of touch in the children from the delicate, airy foliage of fennel to the leathery spikes of rosemary. Other plants within the garden also developed the sense of touch through the contrasting texture of their leaves including the 'hairy sunflower, crinkled primrose, glossy fuchsia and the rose'.[579]

The garden was used to encourage the children to develop their physical dexterity, particularly in the less well-kept areas of the garden. McMillan believed that rubbish heaps should be included in a nursery garden so

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[577] McMillan, *The Camp School*, p. 60.
[578] Ibid., p. 63.
[579] McMillan, Margaret, *Nursery Schools and the Pre-School Child* (Nursery Schools Association, circa. 1923-1930), p. 4.

that the children could explore and make a mess if they so wished without causing damage. The garden also featured equipment such as the 'jungle jim' referred to in Pearl Ackerman's account of the garden, which was designed by McMillan for the children. The 'jungle jim' was clearly in part inspired by playground equipment that had, as was explored in Chapter 2, been installed in parks from the late nineteenth century to encourage the physical development of children. However, this piece of equipment clearly also inspired play amongst the children and this was certainly in line with the theories of Froebel and later Maria Montessori (1870-1852), who both identified the potential of play to develop the mind, body and senses through creating a greater awareness of the world.[580]

Figure 145: 'Jungle Jim' at the RMOANS (Source: London Metropolitan Archives), designed by Margaret McMillan.

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[580] *More Than Just An Early Childhood: Play Theories: Froebel & Montessori:* www.casadelbambino.blogspot.com/2005/12/play-theories.html

Despite the jungle jim, McMillan believed that trees, 'are surely the finest kind of apparatus for climbing you can have; boys prefer them to any other...Apparatus can be made by fools, but only God can make a tree',[581] and this may explain why the RMOANS contained more than twenty species of trees. The garden also contained low steps for the children to climb, as well as hillocks and planted tree-stumps. More delicate movements were developed through the inevitable examination of smaller components of the garden. 'Out in the garden it [the child] will we know go to the stones if there are any it can lift and examine, but it will take hold of any and everything else, the tall and sappy stalks, the privet hedge twigs, the flowers'.[582]

The garden was also utilised to develop the social skills of the children. Many of the children who attended the nursery school were poor speakers, due to a previous lack of attention at home and the effects on the speech organs of sore throats, adenoids and tonsillitis. The generous number of staff certainly provided the children with the attention they may not have received previously, whilst their medical conditions were alleviated through fresh air, good food and sleep. However, as was illustrated with Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* in Chapter 3, it was often the garden that provided the stimulus for conversation. 'The events of the border give rise to a great deal of talk, and reports about growth, budding, leafage and bloom'.[583]

The children were also encouraged to assist with the gardening (Figure 146), and McMillan believed that by doing so their social skills would be developed. For example, by being involved with weeding and sowing, '...some consciousness of the labour and patience needed to make things grow takes root in their young souls, and appears in the willingness and sympathy with which all try to help to the limit of their powers'.[584]

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[581] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 23 [1930 Edition]
[582] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 258.
[583] Ibid., p. 141.
[584] Ibid., p. 140.

Figure 146: Children at RMOANS assisting with gardening (Source: Lewisham Archives)

The children's sympathy was further developed through their interaction with the many pets kept in the garden, which included a goat (Figure 147), doves, chickens, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, cats, fish and a hedgehog. By living amongst and caring for the pets, McMillan believed the children would develop the qualities of sympathy and kindness:

> If we love our brother because we have seen him as an easy approach to love, we are likely also to feel love for animals by getting to know them a little when we are small. By feeding them, watching them, seeing them, and hearing the noises and calls every day. Then, just as the colour apparatus is useful once we have seen the flowers, the teaching on kindness will be in place when we *know* [McMillan's italics] the creatures we are hearing about. This is the natural approach and it is one of the great uses of a child garden.[585]

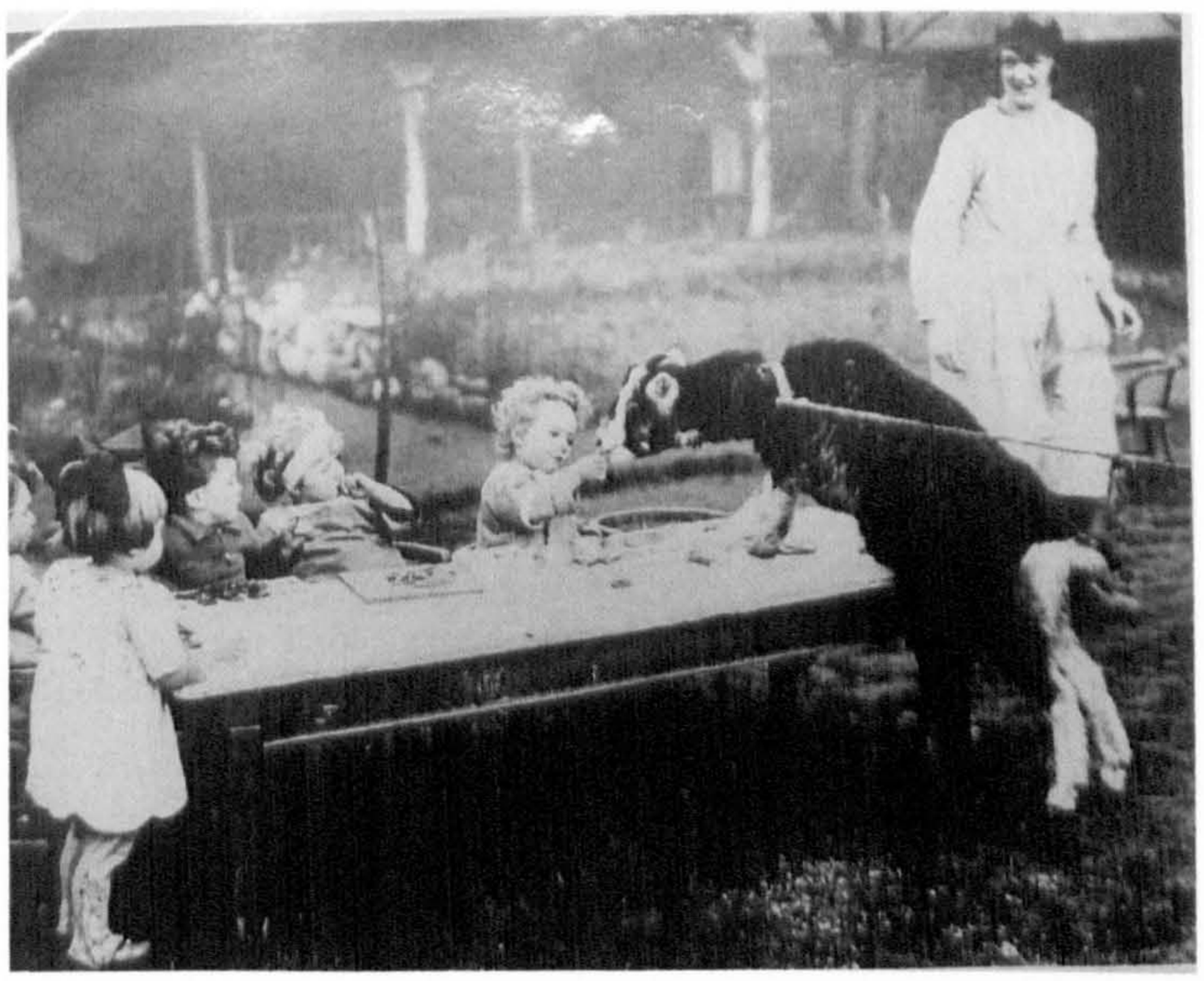

Figure 147: Pupil with goat at the RMOANS (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

[585] Ibid., p. 30 [1930 Edition].

Although the garden was used to develop the children's senses, it was used to prepare the nursery school children for their elementary education. McMillan demonstrated how this could be achieved in her book *The Nursery School:*

> Out in the garden there is much to do in counting things that the occasions come all day. "Take three pails and fill them with sand." "Take four little spades over from the tool-house." "Count the big rose-trees on the dug-out top."...There is counting going on all day in the meadow, in the sand pit, in the herb garden.[586]

The mathematical concept of measurement was also introduced, again utilising the garden:

> When we begin to measure it is in a very primitive way – that is with our hands, our fingers, our foot, or our forearm. 'How long is this box?' 'As long as my hand twice.' 'How wide is this flower-bed?' 'My foot ten times.' How long is your pencil?' 'My finger twice.' Very soon the children begin to see that fingers and feet vary in length, and that is the moment to tell them that once upon a time other people found this out and made fixed lengths and called them by name. A yard measure can be given them, or a foot measure (only as it is, we explain, a grown-up person's foot), and then the measuring can go on apace in the garden and the meadow as well as in the school.[587]

The garden was also used to instil within the children a knowledge and appreciation of colour:

> Flowers are brought into the shelter, and children name the colours and show tints and shades. They fill the vases themselves, and arrange the flowers, and sometimes a child, otherwise not brighter than the others, will show a gift for colour. It is easy to test and feed the colour sense now. The sun lights up the yellow bowl of the eschscholzia field behind the bungalow, and in no paint box, on no wheel, can we find such gold. The violas seem to glow deeper in the afternoon sun, and the red poppies flame under the dark wall like goblets of fire. Children are drawn to this living colour as they cannot be drawn to new pigments.[588]

McMillan also describes how, by informally helping the gardener with simple tasks such as weeding and sowing seeds, the children begin to recognise and name the vegetables and flowers. The children had no formal lessons in horticulture, nomenclature or botany, but absorbed this

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[586] Ibid., p. 125 [1919 Edition].
[587] Ibid., pp. 127-128.
[588] Ibid., p. 139.

knowledge in the same way as they did their mother tongue. McMillan believed that by the children learning about different plants they would develop their ability 'to discriminate, to compare and classify plants and that this would help them when they came to do arithmetic later'.[589]

McMillan used the garden to develop the senses of the children as well as their physical, social and intellectual abilities. She also used it to ensure that the children enjoyed both their education and childhood. In *The Nursery School* McMillan suggested 'vegetables for the table should be grown. Potatoes, cabbages, parsnips, beetroot, parsley, onions, radishes, carrots, rhubarb and marrows'.[590] As well as providing the children with food, McMillan also believed that by helping to grow these vegetables the children would develop, 'wholesome memories'.[591] This reinforces McMillan's belief that children should *enjoy* their time at school, and that the garden was instrumental to this. McMillan's own happy childhood memories were strongly linked to the natural environment that surrounded her, and she clearly sought to recreate for her pupils an opportunity to create similar nostalgic memories of their own through the garden she created, 'How often in later life will their thoughts go back to the first garden, which, surely, must be as rich as we can make it'.[592]

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[589] Mansbridge, Albert, *Margaret McMillan: Prophet and Pioneer* (J M Dent & Sons, 1932), p. 144.
[590] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 46.
[591] Ibid.
[592] Ibid., p. 44.

5.6 The Garden and McMillan's Christian and Political Beliefs

In her study of McMillan, Viv Moriarty[593] identifies the strong relationship between McMillan, her Christianity and the garden at the RMOANS. Moriarty puts forward the notion that historically the garden has developed a particular set of associations in Western culture, stemming from Christianity and branching into the Romantic Movement from where it filtered down into McMillan's own educational philosophies. Moriarty suggests that since the biblical expulsion of mankind from Eden it has become 'the human condition to be continually searching for the lost paradise in order to regain it'.[594] This is, of course, the same concept that has been put forward by a number of literary scholars in relation to a large amount of children's literature that featured children and gardens, as was explored in Chapter 3. The line of argument of this thesis has suggested that the inclusion of gardens in children's literature was often a reflection of actual gardens known to the author rather than a symbolic reference. However, with regards to McMillan and the RMOANS it seems highly plausible that that she may indeed have been trying to recreate Eden, a notion that was developed by the Romantic Movement, and in particular Rousseau, who advocated that if a child was educated by nature he could retain his pre-Eden eviction innocence and therefore grow into a healthy and normal adult.

McMillan, influenced by Christianity and her background knowledge of educational theorists including Rousseau, clearly sought to recreate her own version of Eden in Deptford, and hoped that 'Edens' would be created throughout the country by her trainee teachers: 'We hope to turn out teachers who will be true gardeners of real child-gardens. And if these gardens are in the slum or mean area, so much the better, for they will

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[593] Moriaty, Viv, *Margaret McMillan: 'I learn to Succour the Helpless'* (Educational Heretics Press 1998).
[594] Ibid., p. 12.

make the slum a beautiful place in time and make Edens of mean streets'.[595]

That McMillan should, whether consciously, sub-consciously or metaphorically, try to recreate 'Eden' in Deptford was clearly very much in line with her Christian beliefs. McMillan's Christianity was a key factor to her approach to education and her attitude to her pupils:

> The philosophy of education underlying the nursery school Margaret eventually founded, was an integral part of her Christianity and socialism. She believed that each human being was a child of God – a unique person to be loved and reverenced. True education for all children in all classes, she thought, should be concerned with the whole child, with his dignity, his physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.[596]

As Bradburn illustrates in the above reference, McMillan's religious faith and political beliefs were tightly combined. Although the concept of creating an 'Eden' in Deptford was clearly influenced by McMillan's Christianity, her Socialist beliefs were also reflected in the garden. It is difficult to provide a clear definition as to precisely what McMillan's Socialist beliefs were at the time of the creation of the RMOANS. As with so many other aspects of her life, McMillan created her own unique approach to Socialism created from her past experiences and reading. Albert Mansbridge, a friend and later biographer of McMillan, identified: 'There was an aim in her life. The creation of a society that would make a beautiful life possible for all. She harmonized the teaching of Christ, William Morris and Karl Marx in a powerful synthesis of her own'.[597]

As both a Christian and a Socialist, it was almost inevitable that McMillan should have become a member of the Christian Socialist Society, founded in 1886 that applied the 'principles of New Testament Christianity to social life'.[598] However, McMillan's involvement with the Christian

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[595] Lowndes, p. 86 citing from the forward of the first prospectus for the Rachel McMillan Training College by Margaret McMillan.
[596] Bradburn, p. 177.
[597] Mansbridge, p. 20.
[598] Steedman, p. 33 (referring to Binyon, G C, *The Christian Socialist Movement in England,* SPCK, 1931).

Socialist movement appears to have decreased once she had established the nursery school, which may be illustrated by the decline in the number of articles she was writing for Socialist publications.[599] There is no clear reason for this, but it is reasonable to assume that following the death of Rachel in 1917, McMillan's time and energy was increasingly taken up with the nursery school and she had little time for writing articles. However, there is also a suggestion that 'she was waning in the faith [of Socialism]'.[600]

McMillan's loss of 'faith' appears to have been not so much in the concept of Socialism, but rather in the workings of the political systems in England, which did not move quickly enough for either her or her pupils, despite her 'ceaseless agitation'.[601] Writing about one of the pupils at her camp school, McMillan stated:

> How cheery and high-hearted [Fred] is, yet at the same time one can see that hunger and the misery at home are bearing a little too hard on Fred. What do I propose? Reform the land laws? Bring in socialism? Destroy capitalism? Yes! But in the meanwhile? You see, Fred is twelve. In four years from now it will be too late to help him.[602]

Despite her lessened involvement with the Socialist societies, McMillan's core Socialist beliefs, that 'the suffering of the poor is altogether unnecessary'[603] and that 'every child was of infinite value'[604] remained constant and, true to her character, she continued to do all that she could to bring these about.

As part of her own Socialist beliefs, McMillan sought to give inner-London working-class children the same opportunities as more fortunate children. She provided them with bathing and sleeping facilities, wholesome food,

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[599] Steedman, Bibliography, pp. 314-321 gives a comprehensive list of McMillan's articles in chronological order.
[600] Steedman, p. 161 (quoting letter from John Bruce Glasier, editor of the *Labour Leader* to his sister, 1 September 1905).
[601] McMillan, Margaret, Undated letter (University of Greenwich archives ref: A1/1-100).
[602] Steele, quoting McMillan article on The Camp School [unable to source], p. 14.
[603] McMillan, 'In an Open-Air Camp School: Startling Discovery of Unnecessary Suffering', *The Herald,* 3 January, 1913, p. 2.
[604] Anon, 'The Late Miss Margaret McMillan: A Distinguished Lady and Great Personality', *Kentish Messenger,* 24 April 1931.

medical care, trained nursery nurses and access to nature. Although the children were clearly McMillan's main priority, she was also concerned with the plight of their parents. McMillan was often asked why there was a need for nursery schools and 'Should not every mother take entire charge of her little ones till they are of school age? Is it not her duty to remain at home and to devote herself to them?'.[605] McMillan's defence was that whilst the 'well-do-do' mother had the benefits of a nurse, a governess, a maid and a cook to assist her with the upbringing of her children, 'The working class mother in her tiny home has no help at all'.[606] In keeping with her Socialist beliefs, McMillan was keen to bring an end to 'the suffering of the poor' and this extended beyond the child and into their family.

McMillan provided the working-class mother with an opportunity to access nursery education for her children that had hitherto been the reserve of the middle and upper class. McMillan was also adamant that the nursery should be as close to the children's homes as possible, because 'in this way we can get nearer what is best in the good private nursery, viz. the nearness of the mother, and also her co-operation and even control. She should, if possible, see her children all day, or be near them and able to see them often'.[607] The situation of the RMOANS, in a very developed area of London, ensured that it was overlooked by a large number of windows, many of which belonged to the homes of the children and their families. 'A Nursery-School is, or should be, a part of the home life. Ours is overlooked by a hundred windows, and often there is a crowd of eager faces at each'.[608]

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[605] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, pp. 21-22.
[606] Ibid., p. 22.
[607] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 12 [1930 Edition].
[608] Ibid., p. 29 [1919 Edition].

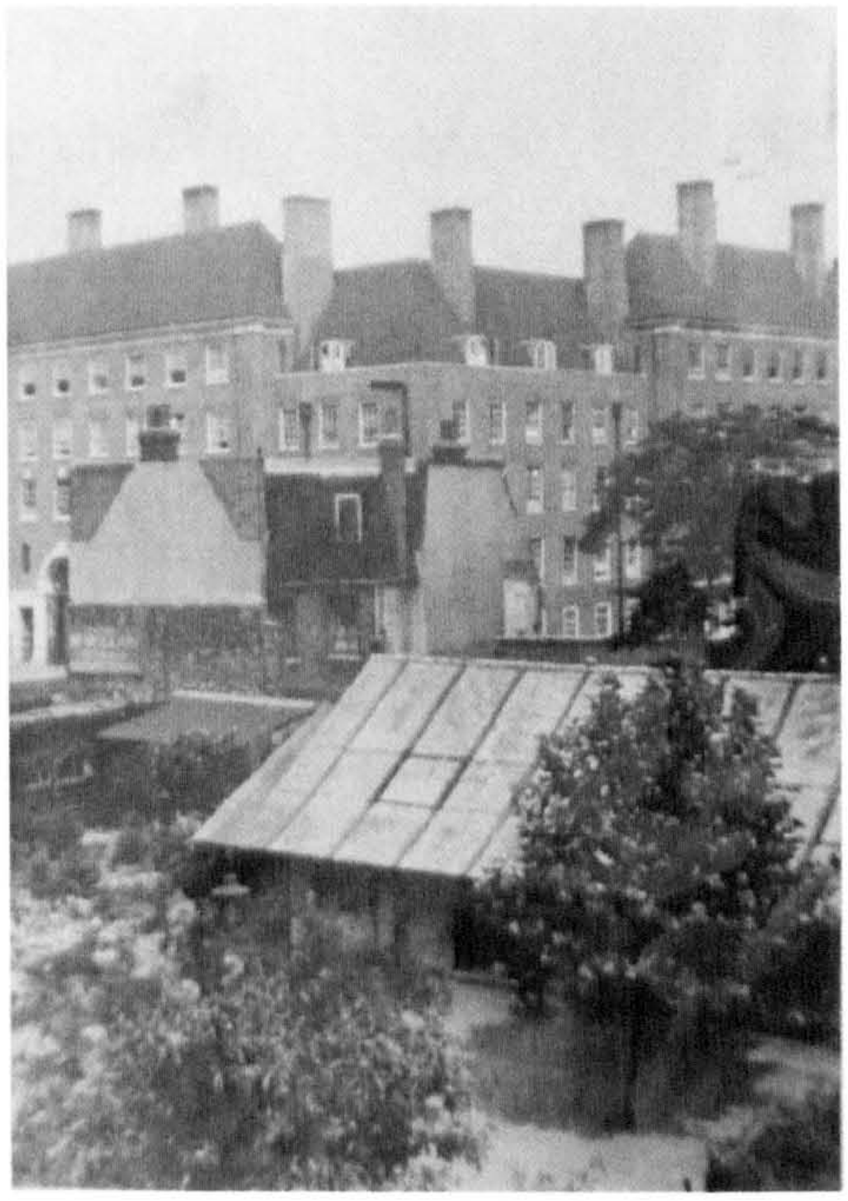

Figure 148: Photograph of RMOANS (Source: McMillan Archives at Lewisham Library), illustrating how the homes of the children's families overlooked the nursery and gardens.

The large site that the RMOANS occupied, and its situation where many families were able to see in from their windows, inevitably made it part of the local landscape and community. McMillan utilised this to broadcast her Socialist beliefs. Steedman argues that the school was purposely

> Designed to be *watched*, to be visible from the windows of the huddled houses surrounding it, and the people were meant to *see that it could be done:* that with very little money and minimal equipment, it was possible to take a dirty, malnourished, swollen-eyed child and make it healthy and beautiful. The people were thus to be awakened to a sense of how they had been robbed, promoted into political consciousness by their children.[609]

Thus McMillan used the RMOANS and the garden as a physical demonstration of the potential of Socialist advancement for the working-class. McMillan realised that many of the problems faced by local families and their children were 'exacerbated by the ignorance and moral degradation of their parents',[610] and she realised the potential of the attractive garden as an incentive for the parents to enter the nursery school. Once there, the parents were encouraged to interact with other parents, the staff and herself. A mother's club was created that not only

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[609] Steedman, p. 181.
[610] Bradburn, p. 174

allowed the mothers to socialise with one another, but also provided lectures on home and child management, 'so that they could learn to be appropriate carers and educators. It was part of Margaret McMillan's political philosophy that bringing a new understanding to the working-class people of Deptford was important, so they could be advanced educationally and politically'.[611] McMillan's mother's club also reflected the efforts being made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the government and philanthropists to encourage the concept of self-help amongst the lower classes. Self-help schemes included the development of libraries, mutual savings banks, sick funds, temperance societies and adult education. In 1899 the National Council of Adult Schools was formed and by 1910 there were over 1,900 schools involving over 114,000 adults.[612]

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[611] Moriarty, p. 1.
[612] Smith, M K, (2004) 'Adult Schools and the Making of Adult Education', www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/adultschools.htm

5.7 McMillan and the Development of Nursery Schools

In 1917, shortly after the creation of the nursery, Rachel died at the age of 58, exhausted from her work at the camp and nursery and nursing McMillan through illness. McMillan continued her journey alone, although she always felt the presence of Rachel was guiding her:

> She has come back in great power. I must not tell that to strangers. How can I tell them what I know – that she controls the whole of the work, and guides its future? And has lifted the Veil from Death and shown that it is truly Life more abundant.[613]

Whether through her own initiative or Rachel's spiritual guidance, McMillan continued to develop her work for nursery school children. In 1918 McMillan changed the name of the Baby Camp to the 'Rachel McMillan Memorial Training Centre and Open-air Nursery School' in memory of her sister, and this marked the start of McMillan training teachers in the open-air nursery school system. By 1930 a specific teacher training college was opened. This was originally designed to take 90 students, but proved so popular that it was extended in 1931 and 1937 to accommodate all the students.[614] As the students teachers worked in the RMOANS, McMillan was insistent that her students, 'must learn gardening',[615] and their syllabus for this part of the course included how to create flower beds; planting trees, roses and vegetables; taking care of a greenhouse and the germination and dispersal of seeds.[616]

Although McMillan's main focus was clearly her own nursery school, she was also active in campaigning for the country-wide, and indeed world-wide, provision of open-air nursery school education, and she used her own school as a spring-board for this. The log books of the school from 1922 to 1928 record a long list of visitors to the school, including many

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[613] Letter from MM to Mr Unwin 18 Dec 1925 (University of Greenwich Archives).
[614] Steele, p. 55.
[615] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 262.
[616] Ibid., p. 263.

from overseas.[617] McMillan also invited a number of well-known dignitaries to her school and it was said that, 'Surely everybody who is anybody visits Deptford's famous Rachel McMillan nursery school and training college at some time or other'.[618] Visitors to the school included Queen Mary, Bernard Shaw, Walter De La Mere and the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who described his visit as, 'a revelation'.[619]

Figure 149: Stanley Baldwin visiting McMillan and the RMOANS during Nursery Christmas Party, 1928 (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

With such a high profile, it is no surprise that McMillan's contribution to nursery education was recognised beyond Deptford, and in 1917 she was made a Commander of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE). Later that same year McMillan invited Herbert Fisher, President of the Board of Education, to open a Memorial Hall in honour of Rachel at the school, a few weeks before his first reading of the 1918 Education Bill. This Bill was regarded as offering great hope to those involved in the nursery school movement, as it allowed, for the first time, Local Education Authorities to provide nursery schools, although it did not make it compulsory for them to do so. Nonetheless, 'the

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[617] For example a random entry for week commencing 22 Oct 1922 includes visitors from Toronto and Sydney.
[618] *The Kentish Mercury*, 26 March 1954, p. 11.
[619] Letter from Stanley Baldwin to Margaret McMillan, 20 Dec 1928.

establishment of Nursery Schools was one of the outstanding features of the new education Act'.[620] During his speech to the House of Commons on the first reading of the Bill, and no doubt influenced by his recent visit to the RMOANS, Fisher expressed the hope that the development of nursery schools would 'often be open-air schools' which he speculated would result in 'a real improvement in the health of young children'.[621] McMillan herself had high hopes as a result of this 'great Bill':[622]

> This can mean only one thing. All the neglected, suffering, dirty little children now playing in the gutter, and near roaring traffic and hooting cars will be gathered into gardens at last. And what can this mean? A garden-grown humanity cannot be as the humanity of the grime and of the street. It will have spent its first cycle in a place where living things are taken care of so that at least they spring up into things of beauty, and colour, and perfume. Those who do all this culture work will be cultured. The little gardeners themselves, not the flowers or the vegetables or the tress, will be the glory of the garden. As they grow up they will long more and more to make gardens everywhere, to mow down and root out the things that destroy, to rear and find a place for all that is beautiful and innocent.[623]

In 1919, McMillan was elected as a member of the London County Council (LCC), serving on the Education Committee. Two years later, the LCC gave a grant to the RMOANS and the school was expanded to accommodate the children who were to benefit from this financing. The number of children attending the RMOANS now rose to over 200. Queen Mary opened the new department, and later the teaching college (Figure 150), and this is indicative of the status that McMillan had acquired. By now, 'Miss McMillan's school was the largest and most important not only in London, but in the whole of England. And incomparably the best'.[624]

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[620] Barlow, M and Holland, R, *The Education Act, 1918, with notes and introductory chapters* (National Society, 1918), p. 71.
[621] McMillan et al, *Nursery Schools*, p. 3.
[622] McMillan, *The Nursery School*, p. 350.
[623] Ibid., pp. 350-351.
[624] Ballard, P B, *Margaret McMillan: An Appreciation* (Temple Press, 1937), p. 1.

Figure 150: Queen Mary at the Opening of the Rachel McMillan Training College, 1930
(Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

In 1923 McMillan was elected as President of the newly formed Nursery School Association, which resolved to 'undertake a campaign of propaganda and to work for the general advancement of Nursery School education'.[625] McMillan's election to this role, which she held for several years, reinforces McMillan's status as an expert on nursery education, and gave her a further platform from which to preach the benefits of open-air nursery education.

Throughout her later life, McMillan maintained her belief that nursery education, and in particular open-air nursery schools utilising gardens, were the way of the future. A few years before her death, McMillan sent a letter to her students that was published in the 1929 Rachel McMillan News Sheet in which she stated 'there is no longer any doubt that Open-Air Nursery schools are coming fast, and that they will profoundly affect our whole system of national educational and social life'.[626]

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[625] Bradburn, p. 144.
[626] Rachel McMillan News Sheet, 1929, Letter from MM to students Barry, p. 1.

In 1930 McMillan was made a Member of the Companions of Honour 'for services to the Nursery School Movement',[627] another clear indication of the status and respect that McMillan had achieved. McMillan's death in 1931, at the age of 70, was mourned from the working-class nursery children at her school to Queen Mary. One of many obituaries records:

> It would be hard to make the world, and our own country in particular, realise how much it owes to the woman who died at Harrow on Sunday, March 29, 1939. Without hesitation, I mark Margaret McMillan as the greatest and most heroic figure in the world of education up to now. Was she not the first to discover that the mind and the body of the child cannot be separated and that to try and education the one without fully educating the other was waste and folly?[628]

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[627] Bradburn, p. 219.
[628] Anon, 'In Memory of Margaret McMillan', *The Labour Woman*, May 1931, p. 58.

5.8 The Development of Nursery Education

Despite the efforts of McMillan, her students, admirers and the Nursery School Association, the hoped-for nationwide provision of access to nursery education for all children never transpired. This was largely due to a government reversal of the nursery school programme promised in the 1918 Education Bill, caused by 'government economies',[629] as a result of World War I. By 1925 there were only twenty-six recognised nursery schools in England and by 1929 only a further two had been established.[630] In 1936 there was an estimated population of 1,671,100 children between the ages of two and five.[631] Of these, 159,655 children were accommodated in public elementary schools, whilst only 11,061 children - less than one percent of all children between the ages of two to five - were enrolled into recognised nursery schools. Forty of these were provided by Local Education Authorities, and forty seven by voluntary agencies.[632] The LCC maintained only four nursery schools in London, of which at least two of these were open-air nurseries that included the RMOANS and Columbia Market Nursery School (Figure 151).

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[629] Hills Cotterill, J, 'Portrait Gallery. Margaret McMillan: Friend of Little Children', *Spectrum*, p. 21.
[630] Bradburn, p. 205.
[631] Cusden, p. 160 (quoting from *State of Public Health*, HMSO, 1936).
[632] Ibid., p. 160 (quoting from List 42, Board of Education, HMSO 1937).

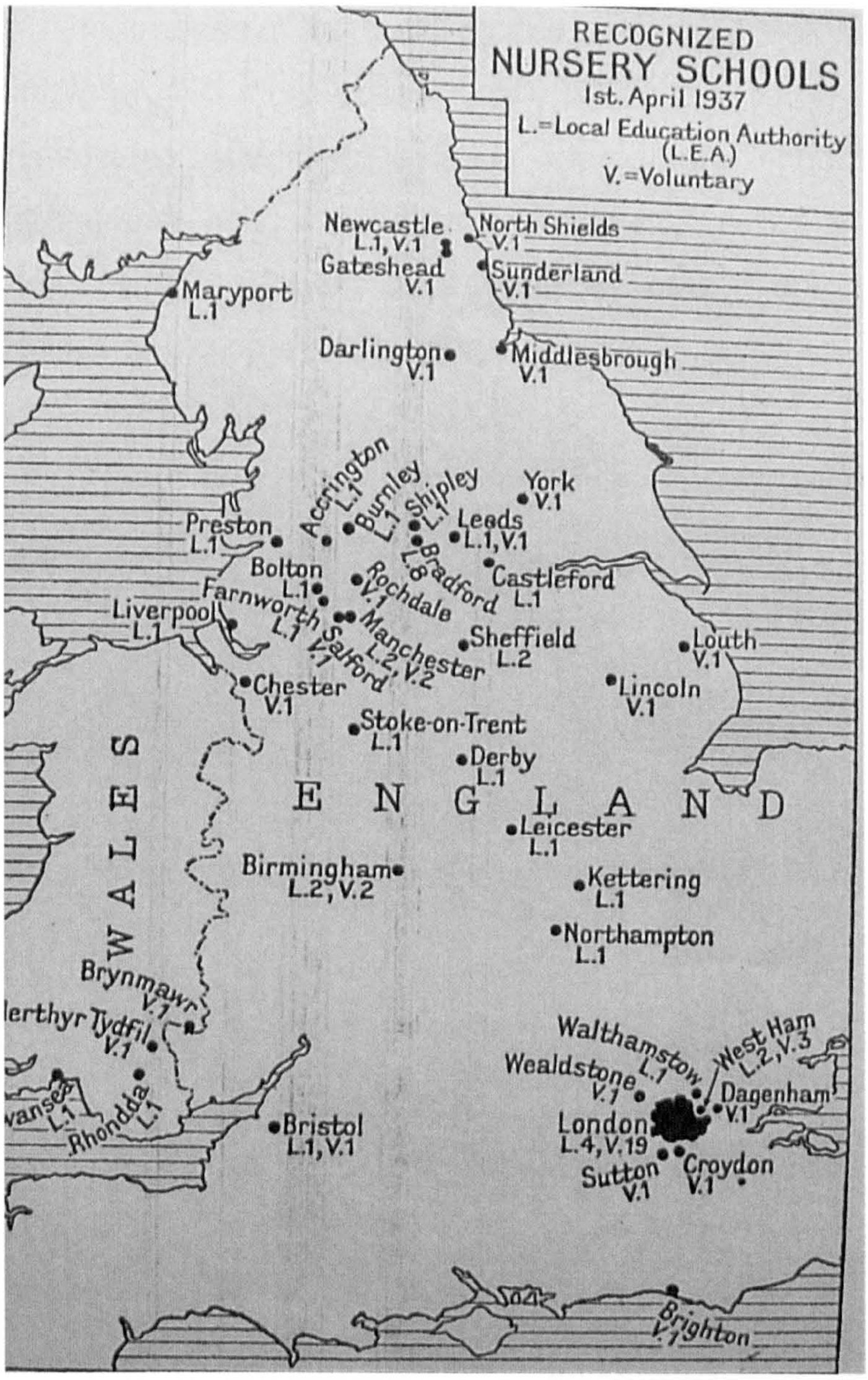

Figure 151: Map Showing Distribution of Recognized Nursery Schools at 1 April 1937 (Source: Cusden, *The English Nursery School,* 1938, p. 161.). London has 4 LEA ('L') Schools and 19 Voluntary ('V').

The reason for the lack of nursery school provision appears to have been due to simple economics. The decline in birth-rate resulted in a decreased school population, so making available space in elementary schools for nursery classes. Despite McMillan's protestations to the contrary,[633] the average cost per head of educating a child at an elementary school was some 20% less than that of providing nursery

[633] McMillan, *The Nursery School,* Chapter XXXII (Finance).

education.[634] Regardless of the success and acclaim of McMillan and her school, it simply proved more economically viable for the government to utilise the available space in existing elementary schools for the education of nursery school children. However, just as the open-air school movement was adopted by private, fee-paying schools, so too were the theories of the open-air nursery.

[634] Cusden, p.239

5.9 Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School

As with open-air schools, the principles of an open-air education created for working-class nursery school children were soon adopted by middle-class parents. The Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School (COANS) was created in 1929 by four middle-class parents who wanted to create a nursery school for children who didn't live in the slums. This was a surprisingly innovative idea at the time: 'This idea about a nursery school being only suitable for children in slums was almost universal in England'.[635] Although the school initially sought to attract children from all classes, it found it difficult to do so as 'many a potential [middle-class] parent has refused to send her child to our school for fear (unfounded of course) that contamination with disease or a cockney accent would result'.[636]

Key to the scheme was finding a suitable property, which was to be financially backed by one the parents who had recently inherited a large sum of money. A property in Glebe Place, which was situated just off The Kings Road, was purchased. The property comprised of two artists studios, an historic cottage reputed to have been a hunting lodge for Henry VIII, and, most importantly,

> a lovely little old world garden full of trees and bushes, stone paths and seats and flower beds. Sunk low in the very centre of the garden was an old well overshadowed by a catalpa tree with stone steps leading down to it from three sides and there was a mulberry tree with a low fork, most suitable for climbing.[637]

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[635] Davies, Natalie, R, *Ten Years' History of the Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School 1929-1939* (Chelsea Open-Air School, 1939), p. 3.
[636] Ibid., p. 9.
[637] Ibid., p. 4.

Figure 152: Children in the Garden of Chelsea Open-Air School circa. 1939 (Source: *Ten Years' History of the Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School,* cover)

The basic building principles of the RMOANS were clearly adopted in the COANS, but in a far more extravagant style. Unlike the financial difficulties that McMillan was constantly battling against, money at the COANS was clearly not a problem. The financial backer of the school paid an 'outsize price'[638] for the property in order to secure it, and then extensive building work was carried out to transform the studios and cottage into suitable school premises. The studios were adapted for use as the nursery school, which included the installation of washrooms, lavatories, kitchens, sky-lights, and 'the knocking out of walls to make the rooms open air',[639] whilst the cottage was updated for the residence of the head teacher and housekeeper with electric lighting and heating. The architect for the project was Grey Wornum (1888-1957), who three years

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[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid.

later was the winning architect for the commission to design the Royal Institute of British Architects Headquarters and who also designed many of the interiors for both the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth liners.

Many of the problems dealt with by the RMOANS were also experienced at the COANS, although for very different reasons. Some of the children at the RMOANS found every day tasks initially difficult due to a previous lack of pro-active adult guidance in the home. At the COANS some of the new in-takes of children were dubbed 'Kensington Cripples' for their inability to wash and dress themselves, turn taps, or remove their footwear by the age of three and a half. The reason for this was not lack of adult attention but rather an abundance of it. The nursery identified that some 50% of the children had nannies[640] who simply did everything for their charges and the children waited for their teachers to take on their nanny's obliging role. The RMOANS found that many young children were so used to eating unwholesome food that they initially rejected the food at the school. Some of the children at the COANS also refused to eat, although this was attributed to the fact that they, 'had at home learnt how refusal of food could disturb nursery life, bring added attention from nanny or mother and so used this unpleasant behaviour to their own advantage'.[641]

The teachers at the COANS also experienced problems with 'uncleanliness' not so much amongst the pupils but rather their nannies and mothers. The children used to play in the garden all day, but 'fussy nannies and parents'[642] insisted the children were clean and tidy on leaving the nursery at the end of the day. The nursery recorded that, 'This attitude on the part of adults demanding such unnatural cleanliness has cause many a problem to the school'.[643] The solution to the problem was that the children were kept indoors during the second part of the day, which was divided by lunch and their sleep to ensure they were suitably

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[640] Ibid., p. 7.
[641] Ibid., p. 9.
[642] Ibid., p. 10.
[643] Ibid.

clean for when they were collected at the end of the day. As the children arrived at 9.30am, they only had a brief amount of time to utilise the very gardens that had been such an appealing factor in the purchase of the property. This may account for why, despite being an intended 'open-air nursery' so little reference is made in archival records to using the gardens as a learning opportunity.

5.10 The Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School and the Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School Today

Whilst modern nursery school provision continues to be inadequate, it is surprising to learn that both the RMOANS and the COANS still function as nurseries today. Although neither school attempts to fully adopt the open-air principles on which they were originally conceived, both have retained and utilise the gardens in which they based and try to use the garden, albeit on a smaller scale, to educate their pupils.

The latter part of this chapter focuses on site visits made by the author to both the RMOANS and the COANS. As well as giving some indication of how the gardens and buildings were originally utilised and to what extent the gardens are now incorporated into the children's curriculum, the site visits also revealed some original surviving features such as a bathroom at the RMOANS, as well as the original structures and buildings at both schools. Both schools also had in their private collection a number of archives and articles relating to their history. There can be no doubt that these schools form a crucial part of British educational and social history, but the RMOANS in particular faces very real threats from property developers that could result in closure and possibly demolition. It is therefore considered absolutely fundamental by the author to record the site visits and the features that were identified.

The Rachel McMillan Nursery, as it is now known, provides nursery provision for about one hundred children. As was the case in McMillan's day, there is pressure to encourage pupils to attend the nursery classes at the local primary schools rather than a nursery and so far two of the shelters at the school have been closed by the council. The Nursery has adapted one of these into a private day nursery for fee-paying children, whilst the other shelter remains locked and decaying. In the remaining four shelters, the children that the school take in continue to often come from deprived backgrounds as Deptford is still a 'poor' area. For almost a third of the children English is their second language, the result of which

is that the teachers share McMillan's problems in encouraging the children to communicate, but in a different way.

The shelters are still based on Rachel's original designs from 1917. Although they have been refurbished, and in some instances altered, they are nonetheless an excellent resource for the historian as they still clearly illustrate the basic principles of the open-air design of the shelters (Figure 153). The shelters are positioned to derive maximum sunlight, particularly through the abundance of windows. The windows were also designed to be opened and encourage the flow of fresh air, but unfortunately many of them have been painted shut over the years. At the front of the shelter is a long, covered veranda, which allows the children to play outside under its cover in all weathers (Figure 154).

Figure 153: Shelter One at Rachel McMillan Nursery (Source: Author's Photograph). The railings on the top of the shelter are a reminder of a playground that was on the roof.

Figure 154: Verandas of Shelters Two and Three at Rachel McMillan Nursery (Source: Author's Photograph), which allow the children to play outside whatever the weather.

Although many alterations have taken place, it is still possible to find features that were fundamental to the McMillan's educational philosophies. One of the shelters still contains an old bath, which serves as a reminder of the great emphasis McMillan placed in providing her pupils with clean bodies (Figure 155). That it is no longer necessary to use it highlights the direct influences of McMillan's campaigning that children today are still benefiting from.

Figure 155: Surviving Bath at Rachel McMillan Nursery (Source: Author's Photograph). Modern access to clean water and bathing facilities have clearly made the bath redundant.

Although many of the architectural features of the nursery remain, the garden has suffered more from development. A plan of the current nursery garden (Figure 156) clearly shows that the majority of the site is now tarmac, as indicated by the grey colouring. Although there are no records stating how and why this came to be, it would be fair to assume that tarmac is far more economical with regards to maintenance than grass, ornamental beds and rockeries.

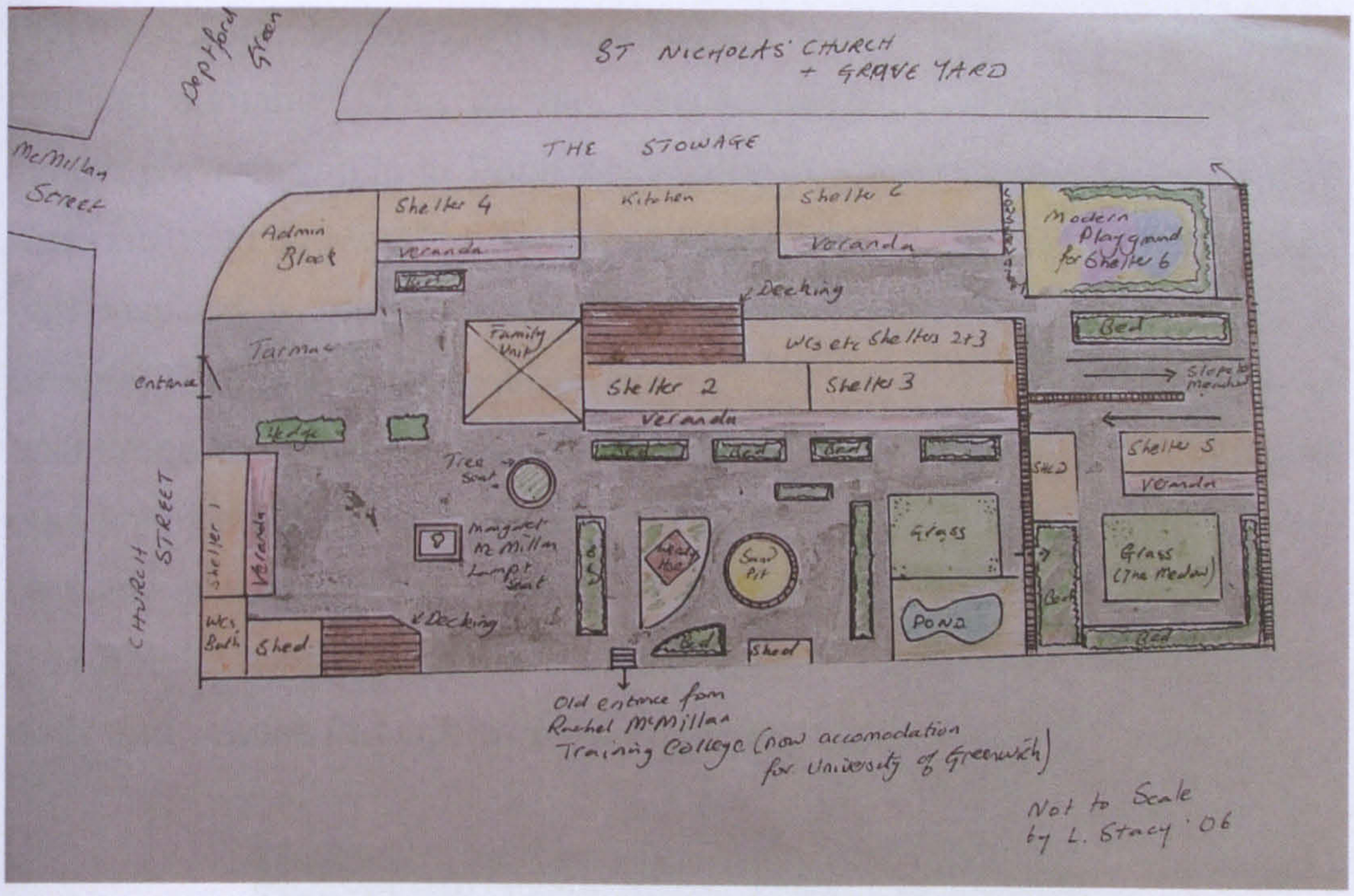

Figure 156: Plan of the site at the Rachel McMillan Nursery, 2006 (Source: Author's drawing, not to scale). The grey area indicates the extensive use of tarmac within the garden today.

In recent years, the garden at the Rachel McMillan Nursery has been 'maintained'[644] by the local council. Low maintenance plants have replaced the roses, herbs and flowerbeds of McMillan's garden and tarmac has replaced the lawns and paths. It is sadly evident that, as it stands, the garden can no longer offer the educational opportunities through the stimulation of the senses that were central to McMillan's educational philosophy. The teaching staff of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School, aware of their educational ancestry, have made some attempts to incorporate texture and scent into the planting, but this is limited to a few plants. The children are allowed open access to the garden, but the facilities offered within it are basic and often in poor condition, for example the pond area (Figure 157). The pond is clearly an example of a recent attempt at providing the children with educational opportunities within the garden, but this area is now fenced off and neglected.

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[644] An informal discussion with a staff member revealed that gardeners from the local Council would 'maintain' the gardens, but not develop them.

Figure 157: Pond Area at the Rachel McMillan Nursery School (Source: Author's Photograph), an example of the neglected gardens and educational opportunities of the school.

The school and garden are in a general poor state of repair, and certain areas have been abandoned altogether. An example of this is the 'Meadow', which was the site that Pearl Ackerman, the student teacher visiting the RMOANS in 1924, so vividly described as having a big lawn with concrete paths and a jungle jim (Figure 158).

Figure 158: 'The Meadow', Rachel McMillan Nursery School (Source: Author's Photograph), an area that has now been totally abandoned due to limited resources.

Ironically, this shelter was the first part of the nursery to receive funding from the LCC and it was the local council, who for economic and safety reasons, closed this shelter a few years ago.

Figure 159: 'The Meadow', RMOANS circa 1920s (Source: London Metropolitan Archives) as it was in its heyday.

Comparing the recent photograph of the Meadow (Figure 158) with that of how it was in McMillan's time (Figure 159), it is clear that the basic layout of this section of the garden has altered little. However, the original shelter was demolished and replaced in the 1950s as compensation by the adjoining college for claiming part of the Meadow garden on which to build accommodation. It is rumoured that one of the motivations behind the recent closure of this part of the school and garden is the prospect of further development of this land. Unfortunately, despite the clear historical importance of this school and the garden, neither the gardens nor the shelters appear to have received any form of national heritage recognition that might help protect the site.

A lack of any heritage recognition has resulted in the destruction and development of certain areas of the site. Shelter Six, which now provides

facilities as a private nursery, has been developed to attract new, fee-paying clients. There are no existing archival photographs taken of this part of the garden, but the garden that has replaced it is in stark contrast to the rest of the Rachel McMillan Nursery as it was and as it is (Figure160).

Figure 160: Playground at Shelter Six (Source: Author's Photograph), with nature reduced to its bare minimum.

Although colourful, decorative and safe, it is impossible not to look at this photograph without some regret at how far removed it is from the educational philosophies, so inspired by nature, of Margaret McMillan.

The Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School has also survived, and like the Rachel McMillan Nursery, has retained its garden. However, a visit to this site offers a very different experience, despite sharing many of the same problems as those at Deptford. Although the school is situated in one of the most affluent areas of London, just off the King's Road in Chelsea, it is within the catchment area of a number of council estates. Many of the families from the estates are asylum-seekers and consequently of the 100 pupils at the school there are approximately

thirty-two for whom English is their second language. Although it began life as a private nursery, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) took it over as a nursery in 1978.

The Headmistress, Kathryn Solly, has a background in Environmental Science. Solly is familiar with the open-air movement and believes that it still has much to offer the inner-London child. In an informal book written to commemorate the nursery's seventieth anniversary Solly states that, 'The 'Open-Air' philosophy is still important today when our children seem to lack safe but challenging space to play in'.[645] Solly is keen that her staff have a special interest in outdoor play. Although the nursery enjoys a beautiful building, the children are free to roam outside as they wish, with the exception of story-time and lunch. Most of the activities inside are linked to the garden in some way; for example in the dressing-up area they may create a garden centre in which the children play.

Although the garden was re-designed in 1996, Solly was keen to retain the character of the garden and ensure that it was utilised to its maximum potential as an educational tool. Solly has clearly been successful, as a recent Inspection Report by the Office for Standards in Education noted: 'The garden area is exceptional and provides a wealth of experiences across all the areas of learning'.[646]

The pond still provides the backbone of the garden, as does the now listed catalpa tree, although the former has been covered over to prevent children from falling in (Figure 161).

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[645] Solly, Kathryn, *Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School 1928-1998* (Document written celebrating the School's seventieth birthday,1998), p. 2.
[646] Currie, Anne et al, *Office for Standards in Education Inspection Report for Chelsea Open Air Nursery School* (2001), p. 7.

Figure 161: Pond area of Chelsea Open Air Nursery School (Source: Author's Photograph)

The different levels within the garden have been retained to encourage the physical development of the children (Figure 162).

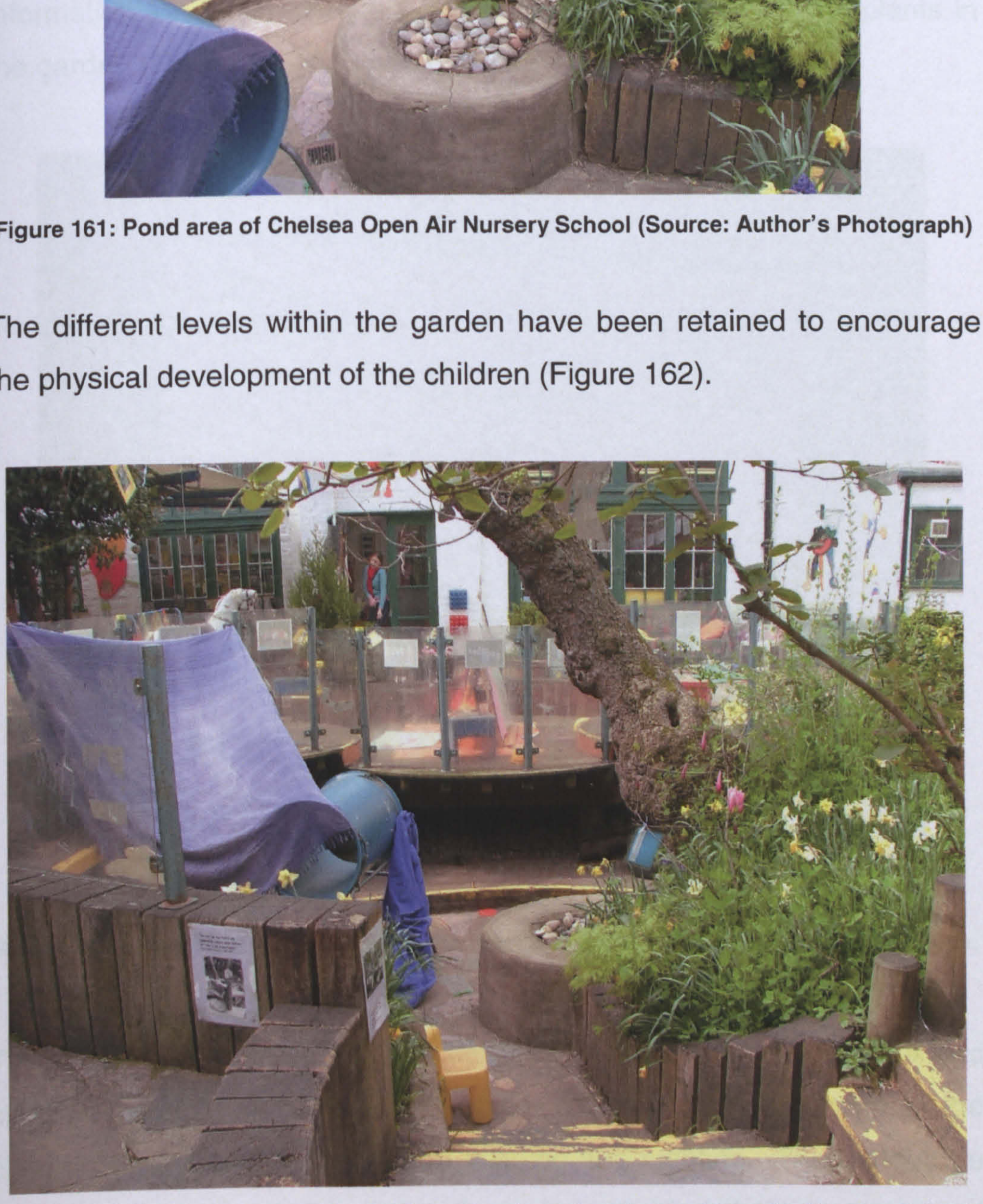

Figure 162: Photograph depicting different levels at the Chelsea Open Air Nursery School (Source: Author's Photograph)

There are a diverse number of plants throughout the garden, including edible plants, those with textures, large shrubs for the children to play in, scented plants, flowers and herbs. These plants have been chosen specifically to develop the senses of the children, as well as cultivating an interest in the nature. When talking to the pupils it was evident that they knew many of the names of the flowers. This knowledge is aided by the laminated signs that are distributed throughout the garden that provide information for pupils, teachers and parents about some of the plants in the garden (Figure 163).

Figure 163: Example of laminated sign with details of plants in the COANS garden (Source: Author's Photograph)

The school does not employ the services of a gardener as the staff and children maintain it. There are a number of small tools to encourage the children's participation in weeding, digging and planting. Throughout the year the children plant bulbs and seeds, watching their progress and participating in transferring them to the garden and then tending them afterwards. During a visit in April, it was possible to see the daffodils the children had planted earlier in the year (Figure 164), and also the

seedlings of carrots and cauliflowers that they would later be transplanting into their vegetable patch.

Figure 164: Daffodils in pots grown by pupils at the Chelsea Open Air Nursery School (Source: Author's Photograph)

When comparing the COANS with the Rachel McMillan Nursery, one is struck by the contrasts. Although both have retained their gardens, the garden at the Rachel McMillan Nursery generally fails to incorporate any of McMillan's educational philosophies. The garden is unkempt and whilst the children are free to roam in and out, a great bonus in central London, the space cannot be described as being either inviting or educational except in the broadest sense. At the COANS the garden is utilised to its maximum potential, providing its pupils with endless opportunities to develop their education through sensory and physical stimulation. Had

the COANS still been a private nursery, it would be easy to attribute this difference to simple economics; but both are maintained by the council. Furthermore, whilst the COANS is acknowledged as being 'expensive to run'[647] its survival is due to the fact that it offers 'good value for money'[648] and it is consistently oversubscribed. In contrast the Rachel McMillan Nursery has struggled to attract pupils to the extent that parts of it have been closed down and a failed OFSTED inspection in 1997, cited the playground as being 'unsatisfactory',[649] although subsequent OFSTED inspections have been more positive. At least two attempts have been made to secure adequate funding for the development of the garden,[650] to include landscaping, water gardens (Figure 165), the installation of different levels and extensive planting, but to date these have been unsuccessful.

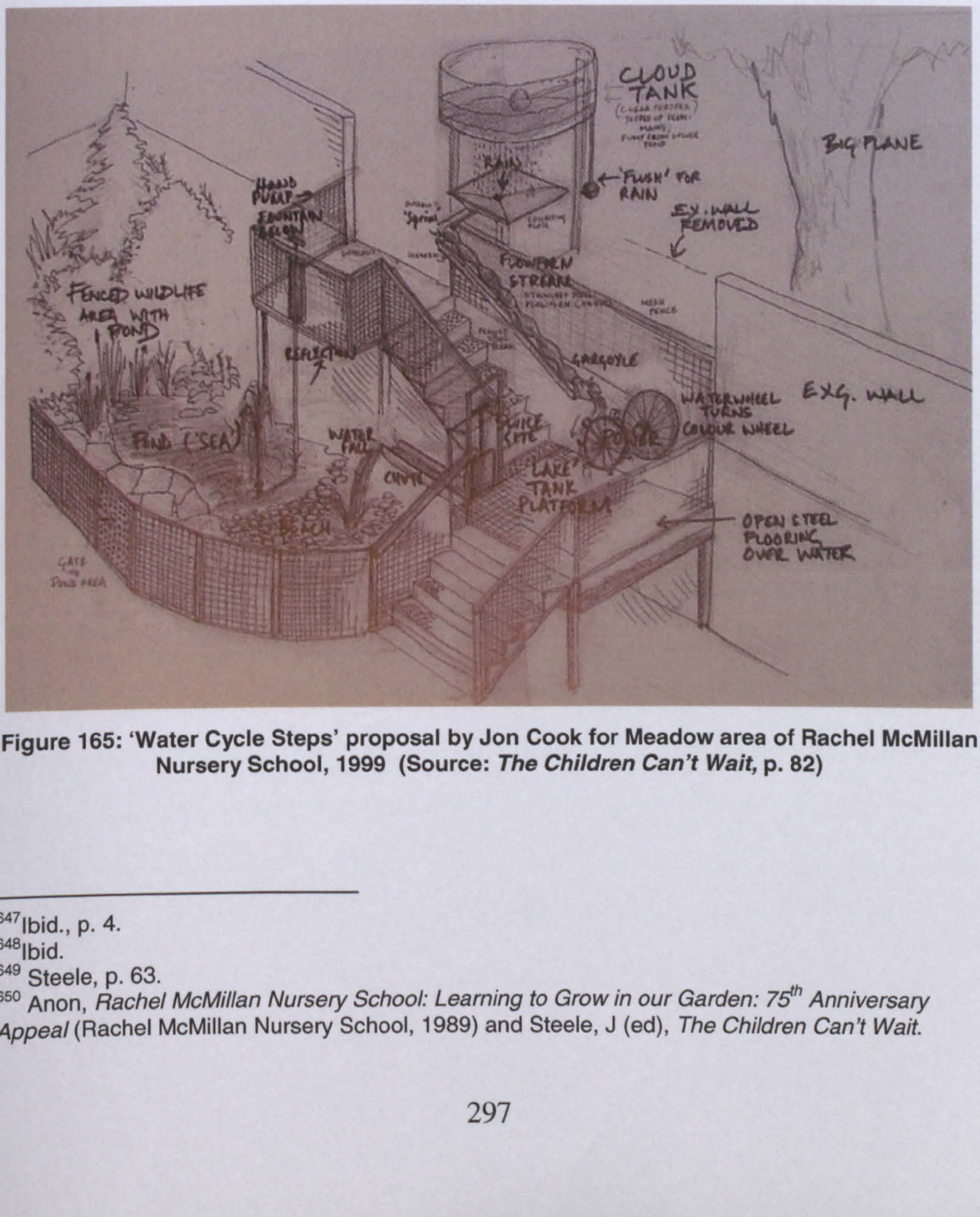

Figure 165: 'Water Cycle Steps' proposal by Jon Cook for Meadow area of Rachel McMillan Nursery School, 1999 (Source: *The Children Can't Wait,* p. 82)

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[647] Ibid., p. 4.
[648] Ibid.
[649] Steele, p. 63.
[650] Anon, *Rachel McMillan Nursery School: Learning to Grow in our Garden: 75th Anniversary Appeal* (Rachel McMillan Nursery School, 1989) and Steele, J (ed), *The Children Can't Wait.*

The COANS clearly offers a highly attractive option for parents whilst the Rachel McMillan Nursery fails to do so. Both schools have the same facilities and funding available to them and yet one flourishes whilst the other fails. It is very clear that the COANS shares one thing in common with the RMOANS of the 1920s and that is a dynamic headmistress who is passionate about nature and is aware of its educational opportunities. It is a somewhat sad irony that the current headmistress at the Rachel McMillan School, who has no apparent relevant background in horticulture, does not appear to share the passion of either Solly or the founder of her school. One senses that the popularity and future of the Rachel McMillan School would be more secure if it were under the leadership of a head teacher who was more sympathetic to the educational possibilities of the garden facilities at their disposal.

5.11 The Legacy of Margaret McMillan

This chapter has focused primarily on the life and work of one woman, Margaret McMillan. It has attempted to reveal the inspirations behind McMillan's utilisation of the garden as an educational tool for nursery school children and to establish whether this was due to factors other than the influence of the open-air movement.

It is clear that McMillan's early interest in nature; her careers as governess, actress and propagandist; her passion for the rights of young children to be fed, clean, healthy and well educated; her interest in educational theories and her involvement with the community of Deptford all strongly contributed to the creation of the Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School. It is impossible to say for certain, but it seems very probable, that had the open-air movement not existed, then McMillan would have invented it. Through examining the background of McMillan and the path that led her create the camp schools and then the nursery school, it is possible to see how these were created as a product of both her own previous experience and the needs she identified of the children of Deptford.

As early as 1901, three years before the creation of open-air schools in Germany, McMillan wrote that the aim of education in early childhood should be 'to get back to Nature – and to natural movements, and happily there is a way of doing this. The best way is of course to reproduce the natural environment as far as may be in the class-room'.[651]

Although it took more than a decade for McMillan to begin to put her theories into practice, it is clear from the above quote that the core of her educational philosophy with regards to the relationship between nature and education was already in place. It is not surprising, therefore, that once she had created both the camp and nursery schools, McMillan was

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[651] McMillan, *Early Childhood*, p. 52.

adamant that her schools were not inspired by the open-air schools of Germany:

> The Camp School is an open-air residential school, which does not separate, however, the child from his home. It was not of German origin; nor do I think there is anything in its origin or development that is not native and of the soil.
>
> It came into existence through knowledge and experience won in the Health Centre and school clinic of Deptford, and because of actual needs that made themselves felt in an urgent way, and in a series that no one invented. That is why I am telling its story, because the story itself is a real one, and not a clever invention.[652]

This chapter has also examined how McMillan fully utilised the garden as a means of educating and physically developing the pupils at her school. Inspired by Seguin, McMillan realised the potential of the garden to develop the senses of the children at her school, and in so doing expanded their intellectual capabilities in preparation for primary education.

It is not clear who was responsible for designing the garden, nor are there photographs or plans to illustrate what the garden looked like as a whole. However, there are sufficient references to create an overall impression of how the garden was during McMillan's day. Unlike any of the general open-air schools, the Rachel McMillan Nursery School continues to exist to the present day in its original format as a nursery based around a garden. The shelters have retained many of their original design components, although, as has been illustrated, much of the original layout of the gardens has been lost through re-design or tarmacing, as has the original concept of utilising the garden as the main educational resource.

Although it has eluded the attention of garden historians to date, it is clear that the garden of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School, together with the shelters, is a unique example of an educational philosophy and movement. It is both surprising and alarming that this site has thus far

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[652] McMillan, Margaret, *The Camp School: An Address Delivered by Margaret McMillan at the National Liberal Club 9th December 1914*, pp. 1-2.

escaped heritage listing. The school has already lost part of its site to developers, with rumours abounding that more, if not the whole school, may also suffer the same fate. The value of land in London is at more of a premium today than at any other time and with little land left to develop in central London the future of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School is clearly very precarious. The school itself is not oblivious to the protection and advantages that listing may have for it:

> The Rachel McMillan Nursery School is an important and significant school. It is part of our local and national heritage. Recognised as such it could evolve into a leading institution of the 21st century, continuing the vision of Margaret McMillan almost a century ago.[653]

As has been explored, McMillan was highly active in the promotion of the development of nursery schools throughout not only England, but the world. Pupils from her training college took the principles of the school outside of London, for example the Glen Agnes Open-Air Nursery School in Dundee was opened by former pupil Miss Mable Brydie[654] and another pupil founded a nursery in Newcastle.[655] McMillan's concept of a nursery school based around a garden was also adopted by others in London, including the Columbia Market Nursery School and the private Chelsea Open-Air Nursery School.

Despite the survival of the Rachel McMillan, Columbia Market and Chelsea Open-Air Nursery Schools, McMillan's dream of nation-wide provision of open-air nurseries failed to materialise for many of the same reasons as open-air schools:

> largely because the early ones were often sparten in character and not entirely suitable for some climatic regions. Also, the need for open-air nurseries seemed less urgent to administrators once houses and school buildings improved, and when, because of the valuable work done by pre-natal and post-natal clinics and the welfare services generally, anaemia, malnutrition, tuberculosis and rickets became less prevalent.[656]

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[653] Steele, p. 7.
[654] Ibid.
[655] Bradburn, quoting private letter from I Barnes to E Bradburn, 18 May 1973, p. 145.
[656] Bradburn, p. 168.

The open-air nursery school may have failed to be adopted throughout the nation, but several contemporary writers[657] on McMillan acknowledge that McMillan's educational theories, with an emphasis on outdoor education, has much to offer the modern-day nursery school child. Steele claims that 'The lives and work of Margaret and Rachel McMillan are as relevant now as at any time in the last hundred years'.[658] Bradburn further develops this notion:

> Some kind of open-air facilities may be needed to-day for children who live in high-rise flats which compel them to play indoors in small box-like rooms even in good weather, thus depriving them of fresh air and companionship. Where this is the case, the watching of television often replaces the active, imaginative and creative play of groups of children, which once took play outside in streets as well as in the gardens and attics of middle-class houses. Margaret's emphasis on ample play-space out of doors is slowly becoming accepted, but the open-air nursery school may not be the only, or necessarily the best, way of providing this accommodation for all children.[659]

Bradburn further identifies that many of the problems encountered by the pupils and their families one hundred years ago in Deptford still exist today. There is still high unemployment in parts of London and although the 'slums' have been demolished, the blocks of flats that have replaced them still do not offer a satisfactory solution to either overcrowding or the access to outside space deemed necessary for young children. Nutrition and the weight of children continues to be a problem, although this is now often related to an excess of inappropriate and un-nourishing food. The Rachel McMillan Nursery School notes that 'the vicious circle of poor environment-poor health-poor achievement is still very much with us'.[660]

Although McMillan was very much a product of her time, Bradburn puts forward the notion that 'One can speculate that, if alive today, Margaret would have been striving to help children living in inner-city areas, large impersonal housing estates, high-rise flats and rural areas, where children still have no access to nursery schools'.[661]

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[657] Bradburn, Steedman, Steele
[658] Steele, p. 6.
[659] Ibid.
[660] Ibid.
[661] Bradburn, p. 232.

Despite being a highly respected and influential figure in her own era, McMillan's name is now all but unknown. Two recent books, listing fifty major thinkers on education and fifty modern educationalists,[662] both failed to recognise and include McMillan's educational contribution at all. McMillan's several books have also failed to elicit sufficient interest to merit reprinting after her death, and even during her lifetime her writings only achieved a small circulation which was attributed by a contemporary of McMillan to the fact that her books, 'were in no sense textbooks. Rather they were the means of stimulation and direction to workers in the field of education. There is little or no quotation from them in the educational literature of the time'.[663] The mystery surrounding just why McMillan's name has faded with history is made all the more difficult to account for given the continued recognition of her near contemporary, the Italian educator Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Montessori also developed an educational system for young children that was child-focused and which she brought to England in 1919. Perhaps rather fundamentally, unlike McMillan, Montessori did not devote her life to one school but instead toured the world for forty years lecturing, writing and establishing training programmes. Montessori was further assisted by her son, Mario, who also took over the running of the *Association Montessori Internationale* after Montessori's death until his own death some thirty years later. By contrast McMillan had no family and clearly threw all her energies into developing her own school and the pupils within it rather than promoting her educational theories.

McMillan's objective of providing nursery school education for every child has not been achieved a century later. In 1985 only 21% of pre-school children in England and Wales attended nursery schools or classes in the state maintained sector on either a full or part-time basis.[664] Despite encouraging women to return to work after the birth of their children, the government currently only provide parents with an entitlement of twelve

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[662] Palmer, J, Ed, *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education* and *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education* (Routledge, 2001).
[663] Mansbridge, p. 140.
[664] Bradburn, p. 230.

and a half hours of free childcare for under-fives for thirty three weeks a year. A recent announcement by the Education Secretary[665] has promised to raise this to fifteen hours by 2010. Almost a century earlier, McMillan believed that in order for the pupils at her school to gain maximum benefit her nursery the nursery should be open from 8.30am to 6pm throughout the year. Furthermore, McMillan realised that this long nursery-school-day provided working-class mothers who worked in the local factories with adequate childcare provision.[666] The on-going lack of nursery school provision for children under the age of five clearly remains an issue.

McMillan's belief in the value of the garden as a means of educating children has also failed to be adopted today. For children at both the Rachel McMillan Nursery School and the Chelsea Open-Air Nursery, there is some opportunity for their educational development to take place in a garden, but for the majority of children access to outside space remains limited. The government have realised the benefits of outside areas to educate nursery-school children, and the Foundation Stage Curriculum of the National Curriculum, introduced in the Education Act 2002, requires that all six areas of the Foundation Stage (Physical Development; Mathematical Development; Communication, Language and Literacy; Creative Development; Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Knowledge and Understanding of the World) should incorporate work done outdoors. However, although this illustrates a return to the theories practiced by McMillan and the open-air school movement, it fails to take into account that the provision of outdoor space in modern schools is often limited, may not have a covered area for inclement weather and there are often not sufficient adults to ensure adequate supervision of pupils.[667]

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[665] Announcement by Ruth Kelly, Education Secretary on 4 April 2006, as report by Waugh, Paul, 'Parents to Get More Free Care for Pre-School Children', *The Evening Standard*, p. 23
[666] McMillan, *The Life of Rachel McMillan*, p. 158.
[667] Interview in March 2006 with Sara Harris, Reception Class Teacher at New End Primary School, Hampstead, London.

This chapter has sought to provide evidence that McMillan, through both her personality and experience, was key to the development of open-air nurseries and the utilisation of the garden as an effective educational tool for the physical and mental development of nursery-school children. Although her work and theories were much respected during her lifetime, both failed to achieve anything of significance after her death. Although there appears to be a slow return to the theories advocated by McMillan in contemporary education, it seems likely that without the passion of McMillan driving the movement forward that the full-time education of nursery-school children in open-air nursery schools will never transpire.

> She gathered the children in her arms, flowers of the most high God, she placed them in a garden, and the radiance of her personality made them very beautiful.[668]

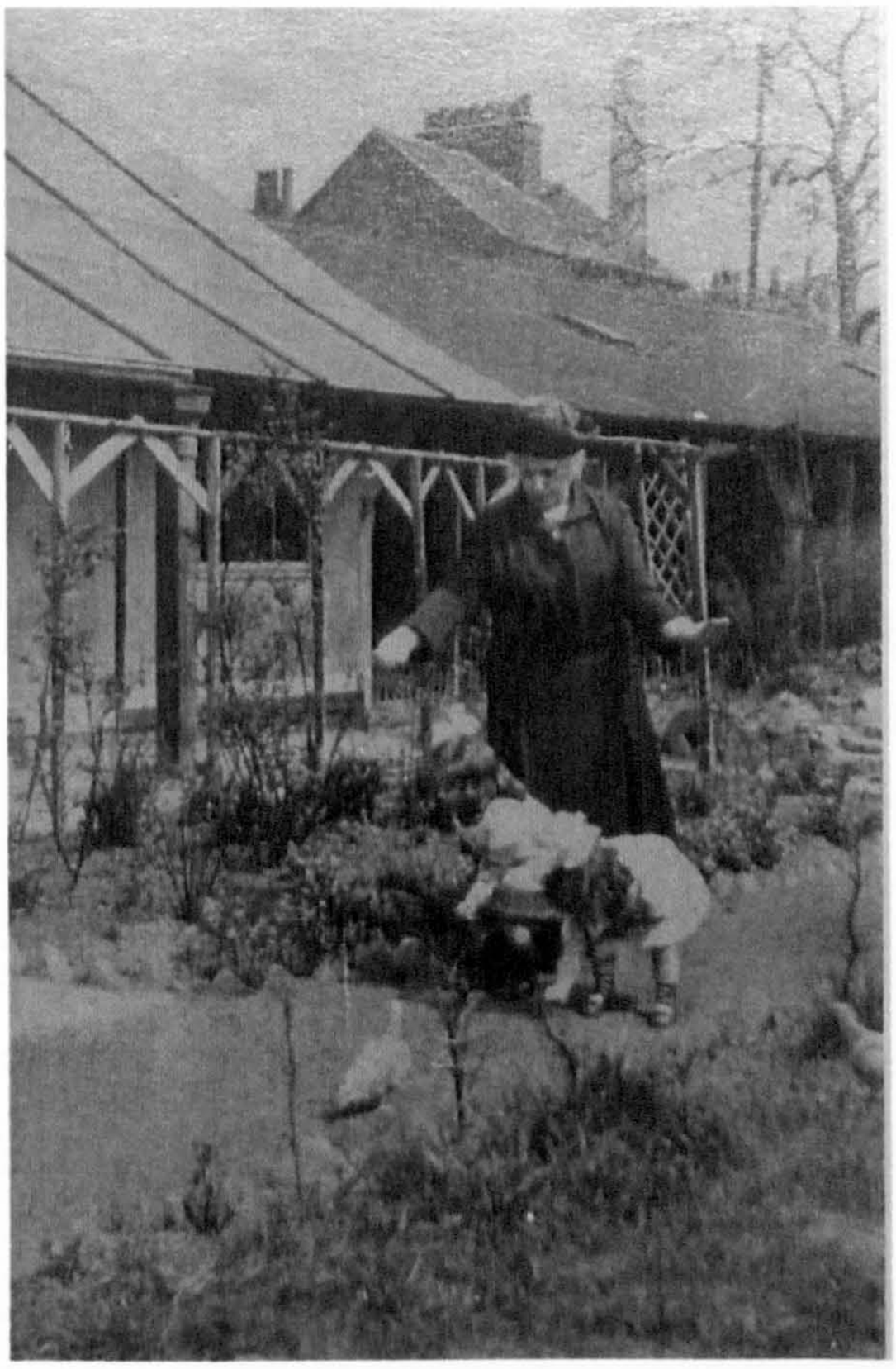

Figure 166: Margaret McMillan with pupils at the *RMOANS, 1920* (Source: University of Greenwich Archives)

[668] Mansbridge, p. 166.

6.

THE LONDON CHILD AND THE PHILANTHROPIC GARDEN

6.1 Charitable Organisations and Gardens for London Children, 1880-1939

It is clear that schools in the early part of the twentieth century were eager to embrace the perceived benefits that a study and appreciation of nature and gardening could have for both the nursery and school child. Such benefits included physical exercise and development, access to fresh air, cross-curricula building of knowledge, an opportunity for potential career enhancement and horticultural awareness. However these benefits were also recognised and encouraged beyond school by philanthropic organisations offering London children access to gardens out of school hours.

This chapter explores the work of two main charitable organisations in London; the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and the London Children's Gardens Fund, both of which utilised gardens to provide opportunities for the physical and mental development of inner-city London children. It focuses on three key areas, which are the motivations for creating such organisations; the extent to which the gardens provided by these organisations developed children physically and mentally and finally the reasons for their cessation. As far as can be ascertained the subject matter for this chapter is one that has hitherto been overlooked by garden historians and the research and observations contained within this chapter are both new and exclusive to this thesis.

Many philanthropic organisations were established during the Victorian and Edwardian periods and, as has been highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis, the cause of children, particularly those from depressed inner-city areas, was a popular choice for philanthropic attention and 'all kinds of people are striving to give the little creatures at least a good start on

their life's journey'.[669] By the turn of the century, there was much emphasis on improving the physical health of the children, which was in line with the general political concern for the health of the nation following the Boer War. A perhaps slightly cynical observer noted that 'the London of to-day teems with practical schemes for adding to the healthy amusements of children'.[670] Fresh air and physical exercise were two means of developing the health of children, and, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, parks and gardens were often regarded as the best and most obvious places for children in Inner London to access these.

[669] Sharp, Evelyn, *The London Child* (John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, 1927), p. 14.
[670] Ibid., p. 103.

6.2 The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and The London Children's Gardens Fund

Founded in 1882, The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA) was one of the first organisations to utilise a series of recent Government acts that permitted burial grounds, unoccupied land, waste grounds and those areas already used as gardens to be compulsorily purchased,[671] provided the purchased land was utilised to provide the public with access to outside space 'for exercise and recreation'.[672] The Open Spaces (Metropolis) Act of 1877 was created specifically to encourage spaces in London to be developed in this way. The government's recognition of the urgent necessity for creating such areas in the Metropolis as opposed to elsewhere in the country is evident in that similar proviso for rural areas was not legally recognised for another ten years with the passing of the Open Spaces Act of 1887.

There was much concern regarding the rapid rate at which the Capital was growing and the negative effects that such dense living conditions was having on the health of city-dwellers. The bleak living conditions in the most deprived areas of London, in which were accommodated the 'artisan and labouring classes',[673] are highlighted in the report celebrating seventy-five years of the MPGA.

> The great sprawl of London was well under way; many children had never seen a growing flower, very few had a park or playground within reach. The mean streets sweltered for mile on mile, and there Bill and Lizzie played, bare-foot and ragged.[674]

The same report continues to give a useful overview of the governmental situation at the time the Association was founded in the early 1880s:

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[671] These include but are not exclusive to: The Burials Act of 1855, The Public Health Act of 1875, the Open Spaces (Metropolis) Act of 1877; Corporation of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878; Metropolitan Open Spaces Act, 1881; Disused Burial Grounds Act of 1884; Open Spaces Act of 1887 and The Open Spaces Act of 1890.
[672] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, Appendix E, p. 82.
[673] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, p. 34.
[674] *MPGA Annual Report 1956*, p. 7.

> In 1882 there was no London County Council. Local Government was in the hands of Vestries and District Boards, and these lacked funds for and interest in public amenities. Only one voluntary open space body existed, then known as The Commons Preservation Society. It was concerned to prevent the enclosure of common land and touched only the fringe of the metropolitan problem.[675]

The 'metropolitan problem' and its consequences were further defined by the MPGA as being:

> the ever widening girdle of bricks and mortar – the ever-increasing height of dwellings and warehouses – the tendency that there is for the current of human life from all directions to flow towards the metropolis – can have but one possible effect and that is to render London less and less the place where the bodily functions can have full and natural play, where bone and muscle in the young may be developed, and where constitutions are able to ward off disease and decay.[676]

These references illustrate several key factors that contributed to the formation of the MPGA. In the late nineteenth century there was no government funding or support for the provision of access to open spaces for those living in the heart of the Metropolis, and even the one voluntary organisation that was in existence was limited in their work. Also, inner London during the late nineteenth century was densely populated and built up and one of the consequences of this was that children, with nowhere else to go, were forced out onto the streets. Physical development was hindered by a lack access to fresh air and exercise and the inevitable spread of disease caused by living in such crowded conditions. The MPGA clearly saw a gap in the philanthropic market. It lists its main objective as simply being 'to supply one of the most pressing wants of the poorer districts of London by providing breathing and resting-places for the old, and playgrounds for the young, in the midst of densely populated localities'.[677]

The annual report from which the above quote was taken also makes reference to the fact that the MPGA worked 'in conjunction with the

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[675] Ibid.
[676] *MPGA Annual Report 1884*, p. 32.
[677] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, p. 34.

National Health Society'.[678] Taken in tandem with the MPGA's main objective, it becomes clear that the primary concern for the MPGA was the health of residents of the Metropolis, whatever their age. It emphasises the necessity of providing access to open spaces for those whose living conditions were dusty, gritty and dirty outside, and suffocating and sickly indoors. The MPGA sought to provide such people with readily accessible outside spaces and in so doing give them the opportunity for some 'merciful recreation'.[679] The MPGA was eager to point out that it was not only the immediate residents who would benefit. It was firm in its belief that by addressing the problems of the worst areas of London, that 'the whole metropolis will be distinctly a gainer by it'.[680] This sentiment echoes one of the main motivations in creating Victoria Park as explored in Chapter 2; namely that the diseases caused by poor living conditions in the densely populated working class areas of London could not be confined to those areas and were liable to spread across into the more upmarket areas of London.

Although the work of the MPGA was not exclusively aimed at children, it did certainly encompass their health needs within the scope of its objectives and work. The society held the view that 'it stands to reason that children bought up in such unfavourable circumstances can be healthy neither mentally, morally, nor physically'.[681] The Association's Annual Report suggests that access to a green space would improve the mental health of the child, whilst, as the quote below reinforces, a caretaker would take guide their moral health and the exercise opportunities of a garden their physical health:

> There will be spots, too, exclusively for children, where they will be out of harm's way under the supervision of a judicious caretaker, who will also prevent tyranny and misconduct, and where they may also enjoy health-giving exercise.[682]

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[678] Ibid.
[679] Ibid., pp. 34-37.
[680] *MPGA Annual Report 1884*, p. 32.
[681] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, p. 35.
[682] Ibid.

The facilities that the MPGA provided for children included general access to many of the gardens and playgrounds created specifically for children.[683] The MPGA also strove to implement the 'opening of every school playground to the children of the neighbourhood at all hours that are not school hours, from light to dusk, if possible, with suitable gymnastic apparatus, under the charge of an instructor'.[684] It is unclear from archival evidence as to whether this latter objective was ever met.

Although the work of the MPGA addressed the need for providing opportunities for physical exercise to inner-London children through their provision of playgrounds, garden and parks, there is no evidence to suggest that this organisation purposefully provided any opportunity for the educational development of the children who had access to their gardens.

It was not until the foundation of the London Children's Gardens Fund (also referred to as The London Children's Garden and Recreation Fund), established in 1911, that a charity was created to provide educational opportunities through the provision of gardens for London children. The London Children's Gardens Fund (LCGF) was an obvious extension and development of the work already started by the MPGA. An article published in *Country Life* two years after the creation of the LCGF recognised that although open spaces and playgrounds such as those created by the MPGA were beneficial, they were 'hardly enough'.[685] The LCGF took the work of the MPGA a stage further. Both were concerned with providing children with access to safe outside space and opportunities for physical exercise and fresh air out of school hours. However, the LCGF was unique in that the garden areas they provided for children were to be maintained by the children themselves and they had at the heart of their philosophy a desire to use the gardens to educate children. In summary, the LCGF was created to provide

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[683] A list of all the gardens that the MPGA set up can be found in the Annual Reports.
[684] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, p. 37.
[685] Anon, 'Little Gardens for Little Londoners' *Country Life*, 23 August 1913, p. 251.

'gardens in some of the poorest Districts of London, where boys and girls from the Local Elementary Schools between the ages of 10 and 12, obtain, out of school hours, both healthy recreation and some knowledge of the wonders of nature',[686] and by 1933 the LCGF had eight gardens in Euston, Islington, Southwark, St Pancras, Stepney and Canning Town, which the annual report for that year claimed 'gave enjoyment to several thousands of children everyday'.[687] It is worth noting that Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* was published in the same year as the formation of the LCGF. Although no primary or secondary material has been identified that directly links the book with these gardening projects; it is clear that they both emphasise the benefits of exercise in the garden and the encouragement of 'the wonders of nature' in children.

The annual reports confirm that many of the LCGF gardens were created from waste spaces in London[688] and that these sites were often initially covered in bricks and rubbish. Once cleared, the garden was then divided into plots (Figure 167) which were allocated to individual children for one year only, such was the demand.

Figure 167: Children Clearing the Site of a Garden (Source: London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report, 1933). This unidentified site illustrates how the children were involved with clearing the site (foreground) and creating the individual plots (background).

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[686] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1933*, p. 5.
[687] Ibid., p. 6.
[688] London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Society Pamphlet, 1921.

Once the garden had been cleared and the individual plots created, the children would, under supervision, cultivate flowers and vegetables, and their 'habits and growth taught to the children'.[689] As well as being allocated a plot, the Fund also provided the children with seeds, plants, basic tools and horticultural tuition and the produce from the plot became the sole property of the plot owner.[690]

[689] *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 251.
[690] London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Society Pamphlet, 1921, p. 1. ('Organisation') and *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1933*, p. 5.

6.3 The Educational and Physical Benefits to Children of the London Children's Gardens Fund

The horticultural tuition of each garden was primarily provided by a head teacher assigned by the LCGF, who was assisted by an assistant teacher in the larger gardens and a caretaker in 'certain areas where trouble occurs after the gardens have closed'.[691] The teachers were clearly held in high esteem by the LCGF, who recognised that 'the success of a garden depends very largely on the tact, enthusiasm and knowledge of these teachers'.[692] The LCGF acknowledged the importance of the work of its teachers by employing them on a full-time basis: 'the fact that the summer hours of work (12pm to 2pm and 4 to 6pm and often later) make it impossible for a teacher to combine garden work with any other form of employment'.[693]

The type of teacher the LCGF sought to employ is clearly indicated in the rules and regulations of the Fund, which state that the teacher 'shall be a woman of education with a knowledge and love of children, and shall have some instruction in gardening'.[694] This is perhaps slightly misleading in that it could be interpreted as suggesting that the horticultural knowledge required of the teacher need not be very high. Evidence suggests, however, that the teachers were in fact extremely competent. *Country Life* reported in 1913 that the teacher would instruct the children 'in every process of gardening – weeding, digging, seed-sowing, thinning-out seedlings, hoeing, watering, tying up lettuces, and pruning where creepers or trees of any kind are available'.[695] Furthermore, Sir Arthur Hill, then Director of Kew, observed that Miss Hoare, the teacher at Rectory Square, Stepney 'produced quite a flourishing botanic garden of great interest in a decidedly uncompromising spot'[696] and also complimented the teachers at the

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691 *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1933*, p. 7.
692 Ibid., p. 5.
693 *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934*, p. 7.
694 *London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Society Pamphlet, 1921* ('Regulations').
695 *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 251.
696 Report of Children's Gardens by Sir Arthur Hill (Director of Kew Gardens), undated, p. 1.

Euston Crescent garden, acknowledging that 'the results achieved are a remarkable tribute to the skill of the instructors'.[697]

Given the emphasis on the quality of the teachers, it is not surprising that education was very much at the heart of the Fund's aims and objectives. Lady Forres (President of the LCGF) described the Fund as being 'really a specialised educational body'.[698] There is certainly evidence to support this claim. The Board of Education provided some 50% of the society's annual income[699] 'in recognition of the valuable work we do in the interests of education of the children who are forced to live in the poorest parts of London'.[700]

The children were educated in a number of ways. There was, as has already been mentioned, the hands-on horticultural training. However, this practical educational work was reinforced with theoretical instruction, as was observed and illustrated (Figure 168) by *Country Life:*

> The elements of botany are taught in a way that interests and amuses the children, and little object-lessons are given, showing, for instance, that seeds must be kept dry by allowing some of the them to sprout on a damp cloth, and keeping a plant away from light and air for the students to see for themselves how it fails and fades.[701]

Figure 168: A botany lesson at one of the LCGF gardens (Source: 'Little Gardens for Little Londoners', *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 251).

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[697] Ibid.
[698] Letter from Lady Freda Forres to Sir Wyndham Deedes, 26 January 1937.
[699] London Children's Gardens Fund Subscriptions and Donations Book 1936. Reference is also made to this a letter from Lady Freda Forres to Sir Wyndham Deedes 26 January 1937.
[700] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1933*, p. 8.
[701] *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, pp. 251-2.

The scheme had the support of a number of horticultural organisations, which could be interpreted as being indicative of the respect that the horticultural work of the LCGF was given by professionals. Both the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the Worshipful Company of Gardeners made regular donations to the Fund,[702] and Kew Gardens provided the gardens with bulbs and plants, whilst Messers Sutton and Sons Seeds donated seeds.[703] The gardens were visited annually by one or more distinguished members of the RHS who provided a report to the LCGF on their findings. Sir Arthur Hill, then Director of Kew, was also amongst those invited to visit and report on the children's plots.

As well as being provided with horticultural tuition, the children were encouraged to keep a daily diary of the garden, including the weather conditions and drawings of plants. This would not only have encouraged writing skills, but was also, 'a great help in training children to be observant'.[704]

Although education was a key factor in the work of the LCGF, the children who participated in the LCGF scheme benefited in many other areas of mental and physical development.

Possibly the main benefit to any child partaking in the scheme was literally their enhanced chance of survival. Large families and severe overcrowding in inner London resulted in many children being forced out onto the streets whilst they were not at school, sometimes with fatal results. The LCGF's predecessor, the MPGA, observed that 'children have no playground but the gutter and the pavement, and the marvel is that child-life is not decimated by street traffic'.[705] The LCGF recognised that by providing access to gardens after school they were quite possibly saving the lives of children. They provided a place of safety for 'a few thousand children who, but for the benefits afforded by the Gardens,

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[702] See Subscriptions and Donations Book for the LCGF from1936 onwards.
[703] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934*, p. 4.
[704] *Country Life*, 23 August 1913, p. 251.
[705] *MPGA Annual Report 1904*, p. 34.

would be forced to spend their leisure hours playing in the drab streets – often at the risk of their own lives'.[706]

It was not only the roads that presented a potentially fatal risk to the children of London. Canals, the other transport link of the city, also claimed the lives of children with nowhere else to play. One of the LCGF's gardens was at Arlington Square in north-east London, which is situated close to the Regent's Canal. By creating a garden so close to the Canal, the LCGF hoped to 'encourage them to come to the garden, instead of playing by the canal side, where there have been so many tragedies in past years'.[707]

The LCGF was not only concerned with the immediate well-being of the children who had gardens, but also with their future, both in terms of employment, adult recreation and home-making. The career opportunities open to boys from inner London was limited at best, and would have been further hindered by the need for many children to start contributing to the household purse 'at the earliest possible age'.[708] By developing the horticultural skills and knowledge of boys through their scheme, the LCGF realised they could enhance the career prospects of children who showed an aptitude for gardening:

> It is hoped that in time, as the gardens become known, that some method may be developed for sending these boys to a gardener in the country during the holidays. By the time such a child is fourteen or fifteen it ought to be possible to get him a job as a garden boy, and it must be remembered that this is not one of the "blind alley" openings; he is really learning a good and healthy trade.[709]

Even boys who did not show an interest or skill in gardening could still benefit from participating in the scheme. It was noted that a boy who did not have a horticultural leaning

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[706] *London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Annual Report 1933*, p. 1.
[707] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1935*, p. 4.
[708] *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 252.
[709] Ibid.

> may love best to run round the narrow paths of the garden with a wheelbarrow, which may be healthy exercise but does not show a taste for gardening; nevertheless it is better than the gutter, and it may be made useful by letting him fetch and carry for the others. A wheelbarrow full of tools or flower-pots is more important than an empty barrow, and he is, at all events, learning to be of service to others.[710]

A photograph from C*ountry Life* illustrates the way in which a boy with little aptitude for gardening could have developed working skills (Figure 1169).

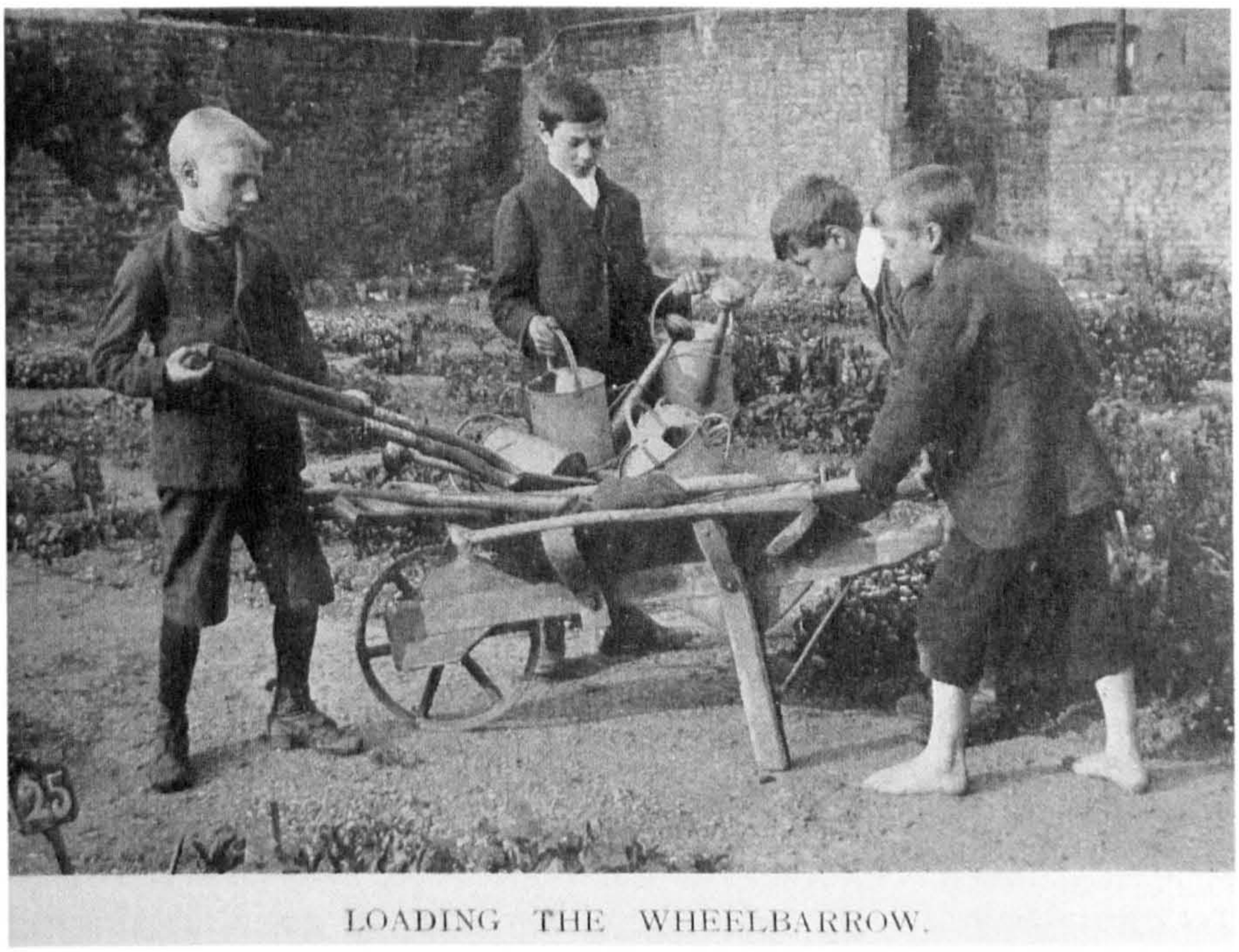

Figure 169: 'Loading the Wheelbarrow' at an unidentified LCGF garden (Source: 'Little Gardens for Little Londoners', *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 252)

Crafts and skills necessary for home-making later in life were also encouraged, particularly in the winter and on wet days. The boys were taught to make pole-stakes, string bags for carrying home their vegetables, tools and toys for the younger boys whilst the girls made pincushions, dolls and aprons. During the spring and summer, the work in the gardens provided all children with an opportunity to at least gain a basic understanding of how to grow vegetables. This knowledge could not only benefit the family dining table, but also potentially provide the children later in life with a 'useful and profitable hobby...[and] an interest in life other than the lure of the streets, which to many would be the only

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[710] Ibid.

alternative recreation'.[711] Again, like Margaret McMillan's mothers' club, this was an example of philanthropists and the government encouraging the concept of self-help within the working-class community.

By keeping the children off the streets both as children and potentially as adults, it could be argued that the LCGF was actively contributing to the social development of the children, which was an area of the children's development that the LCGF were keen to encourage. The rules and regulations guide to the Fund insisted that the children should 'observe the following rules: 1 – To be obedient; 2 – To be fair to each other and 3 – Not to make noises that would annoy others'.[712] There is evidence to suggest that these rules were generally adhered to, 'because there is great competition among the children at school for a "garden", and the fear of losing such a privilege is a strong factor in helping to keep order'.[713]

It would not be unreasonable to assume that the scheme also provided health benefits for the children who worked the plots. However, the plots were not, as might perhaps be anticipated, given to weaker children who may potentially have gained the most from the physical exercise and access to outdoor space owning a plot would have given them. On the contrary, the children selected to benefit from being allocated a plot were 'among the physically fit pupils of the elementary schools near by'.[714] Nor was it the case that children with infectious diseases, who would probably have been excluded from school and may again have benefited from the scheme, were encouraged onto the site, as was the case with the open-air school schemes. The Regulations of the Fund made clear: 'Nobody suffering from an infectious disease should be admitted to the garden'.[715] However, as these gardens were located in some of the 'poorest

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[711] Anon, 'Poor Children's Gardens. Beauty Among Bricks. Youthful Enthusiasts', *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.
[712] *London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Society Pamphlet* 1921 (Regulations).
[713] *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 251.
[714] Sharp, p. 182.
[715] *London Children's Gardens and Recreation Fund Society Pamphlet 1921*, p. 1 ('Regulations').

districts'[716] of London, it is not unreasonable to assume that even those children who were regarded as being 'physically fit' for that area were probably still below the national average. To reinforce this point, an observer noted how 'undersized limbs are growing and narrow chests are expanding, as a result of the "outdoor recreation after school hours"' provided by the scheme. [717]

As well as the physical exercise improving the health of the children, there is little doubt that their access to fresh air would also have been considered beneficial, affording the children the opportunity to 'get all the fresh air and violet rays that clever people have lately discovered to be more precious than coronets or Norman blood'.[718] This was, of course, in accordance with both the open-air school theories and the treatment of tuberculosis. In reality, however, it is questionable just how fresh the air was around the gardens and how much direct sunlight the children received. Many of the gardens were on wasteland, surrounded by tall buildings that often blocked the sun. Some were also surrounded by gas works. An undated[719] report of the LCFG gardens by Sir Arthur Hill, Director of Kew, makes reference to 'smoke [and the] cutting off of sunlight by adjoining houses' at the Euston Crescent garden.[720] His comments regarding the Canning Town site are perhaps of more concern. He states that 'the fumes from the gas-works are enough to kill not only the vegetables but also the workers of the garden plots'.[721]

Despite the evident educational and physical benefits associated with the scheme, at least one observer was cynical. In a chapter devoted to The London Children's Gardens Fund in her book entitled, *The London Child* (1927), Evelyn Sharp suggests that the educational benefits of the scheme were exaggerated to satisfy the 'superior people who inhabit

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[716] Sharp, p. 178.
[717] Ibid., p. 185.
[718] Ibid., p. 31.
[719] Sir Arthur Hill (1885-1945) became Director of Kew Gardens in 1922, which gives some indication of the date of this document.
[720] Report of Children's Gardens by Sir Arthur Hill (Director of Kew Gardens), undated, p. 1.
[721] Ibid.

offices in Whitehall that are called departments'.[722] Whitehall was the home of the Board of Education that contributed 50% of the fund's annual income. Sharp is not, however, totally dismissive of the scheme, but rather questions who it was that received the education. She argues that it was the adults, and those who occupied the areas surrounding the gardens, who were more likely to be educated than their children.

The basis for Sharp's argument is that the waste pieces of land taken over by the LCGF were more often than not previously used as dumping grounds. Once these areas were cleared and converted into a garden, there was 'a marked improvement in the hygienic standards of the surrounding householders as well as an improvement in the public health'.[723] There is, Sharp claims, evidence for this statement. She gives the example of a Medical Officer who observed that the constant epidemic of sore throats in the houses overlooking a piece of wasteland ceased once that area was selected to benefit from the involvement of the LCGF.[724] It is clear that Sharp has a definite case for her argument. However, it is obvious that any rise in the hygienic standards of the houses surrounding a garden would have had as much an impact on the health of the children as on the adults.

Sharp was not alone in noting the benefits of the gardens extending beyond the immediate boundaries and into the surrounding community. In the RHS Report of 1934, it was noted:

> There was undoubtedly evidence of a growing interest in the neighbourhood of the gardens, as the neighbours had helped the children with their dirty water and what was still more noticeable was the fact that window boxes with flowers were appearing in the windows overlooking the gardens, the people in the houses asking for soil from the children's gardens. This was particularly noticeable in Euston Crescent, which in former years had an extremely drab and dreary appearance.[725]

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[722] Sharp, p. 180.
[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid., pp. 180-1.
[725] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934*, p. 6.

Other gardens were also acknowledged as having a positive impact on the community. The Rectory Square garden was described as being, 'a real oasis in a wilderness of bricks and mortar'[726] and of the Camden Crescent garden it was said that 'undoubtedly it is an ornament to the neighbourhood'.[727] Again, this clearly echoes part of McMillan's educational and social theories. McMillan recognised that a benefit of setting up set up her nursery in the middle of a very deprived and built-up area was that it allowed people to observe it from their overlooking windows and see for themselves that it was possible to have a beautiful garden and clean, well tended children. Not only did this have a positive effect on the local community, but it was also hoped by McMillan that it would inspire them to see the potential of what could be achieved and not accept the situation as it was.

Two photographs are taken from the London Children's Gardens Fund 1934 Annual Report depicting 'Before' and 'After' images of the site at Great Sutton Street (Figure 170) illustrate the positive aesthetic impact clearing a site and creating a garden would have had on the local community. This point is reinforced in a story recounted in the 1934 Annual Report relating to the opening of the garden,

> Small visitor, to his Grannie (whose rooms overlook this garden).
> "Why, Grannie, look! They're growing *flowers*, now, instead of *beadsteads*!!"[728]

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[726] Report of Children's Gardens by Sir Arthur Hill (Director of Kew Gardens), undated, p. 1.
[727] Ibid., p. 2 .
[728] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934*, p. 6.

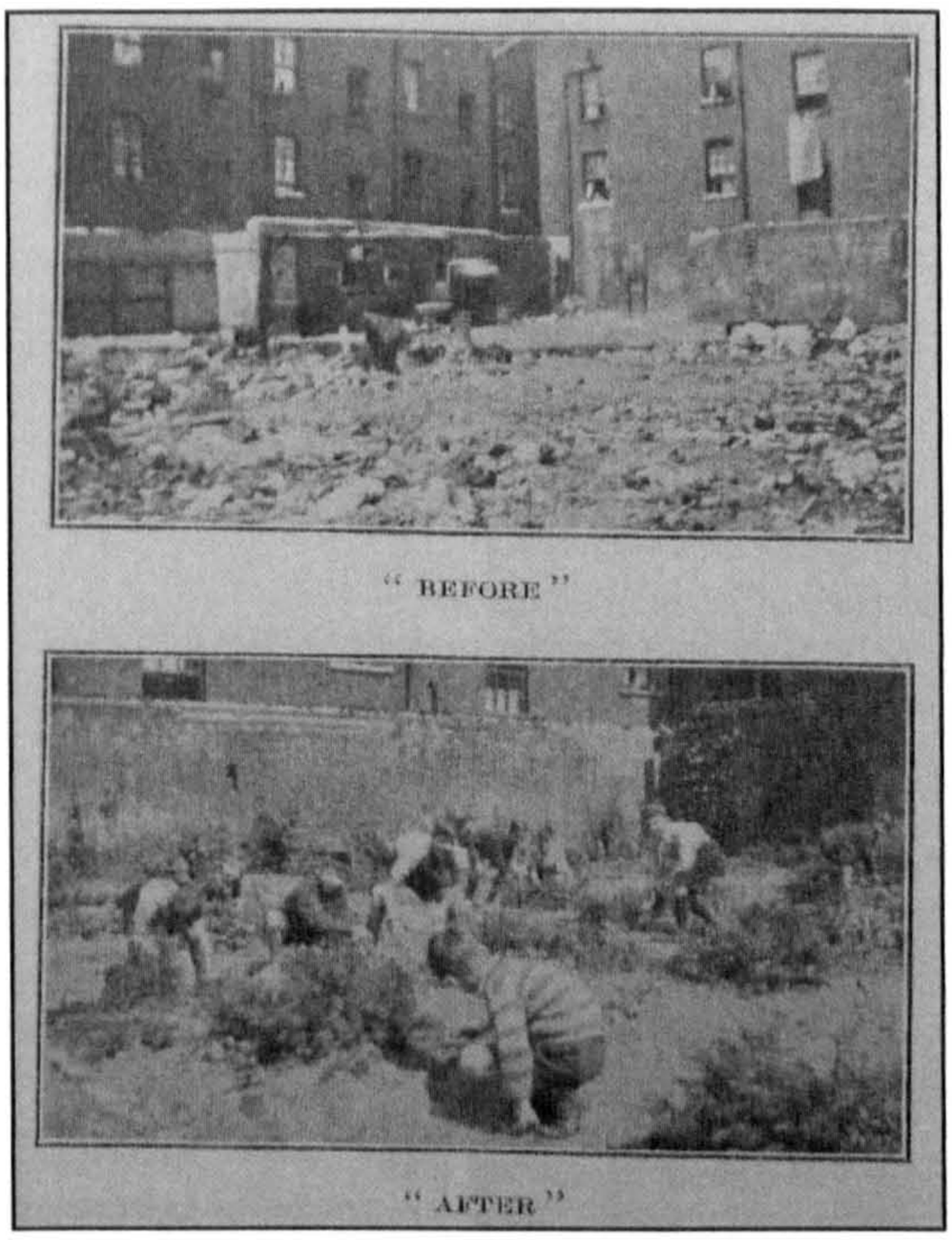

Figure 170: "Before" and "After" photographs of London Children's Gardens Fund site at Great Sutton Street (Source: *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934).* An example of how the residents overlooking the gardens would have benefited.

Although only a limited number of children were able to have their own garden plot, other members of the family would have benefited from the garden, particularly the younger children. The Fund recognised and accommodated the reality that many ten to twelve year olds of these areas were 'minders' to their younger siblings. Younger children were admitted into the gardens and in some supervised playgrounds were provided for the infants to allow the older children the time to tend to their own plots.[729] It is possible that the supervision of infants was introduced as a result of the following reported incident:

> One little fellow, so keen was he on the cultivation of his allotment, that not even the duty of "minding" a baby brother could deter him from his agricultural pursuits, and to overcome the difficulty he hit upon the ingenious expedient of burying the baby up to its neck in the soft black soil while he tended his plot! Happily the infant was discovered before any harm was done, and steps were taken to curb the ardour of this youthful enthusiast.[730]

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[729] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1937*, p. 3.
[730] *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.

Photographic evidence from *Country Life* (Figure 171) and the *1937 LCFG Annual Report* (Figure 172) both confirm the presence of younger children at the sites.

Figure 171: Detail of children gardening at the London Children's Gardens Fund site at Stepney (Source: *Country Life* 'Little Gardens for Little Londoners', 23 August 1913, p. 252).

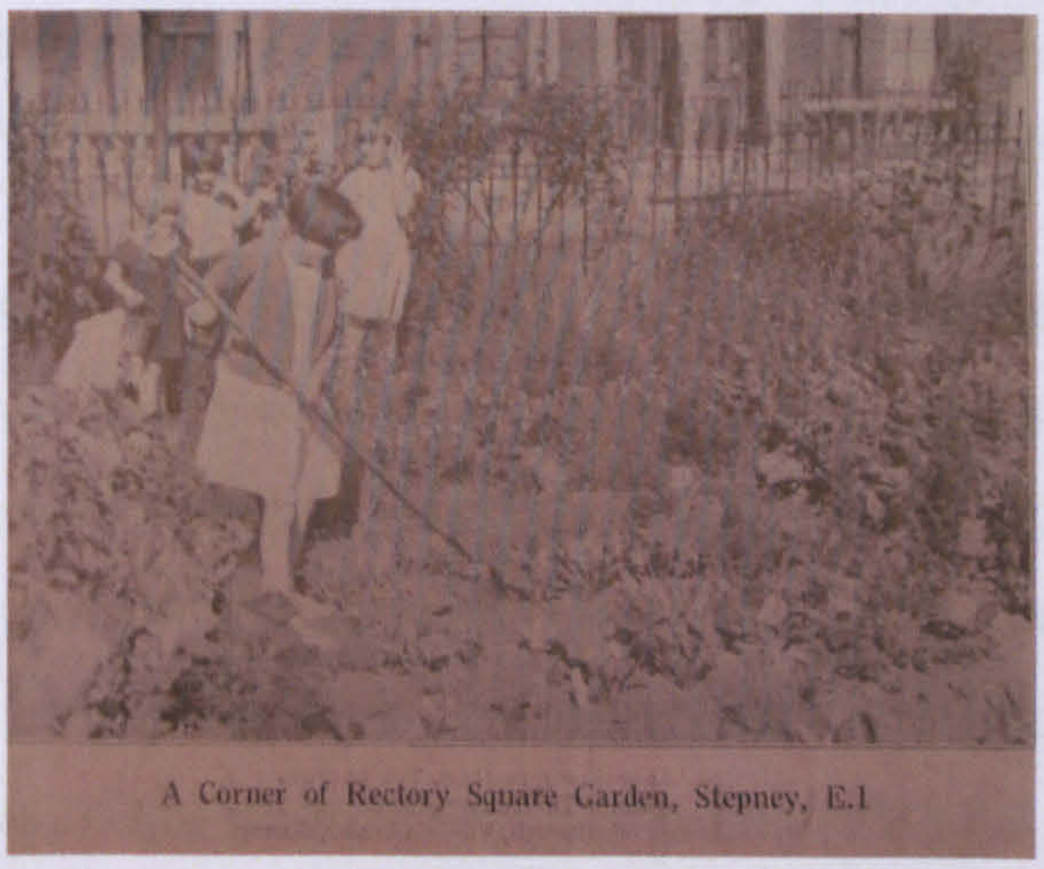
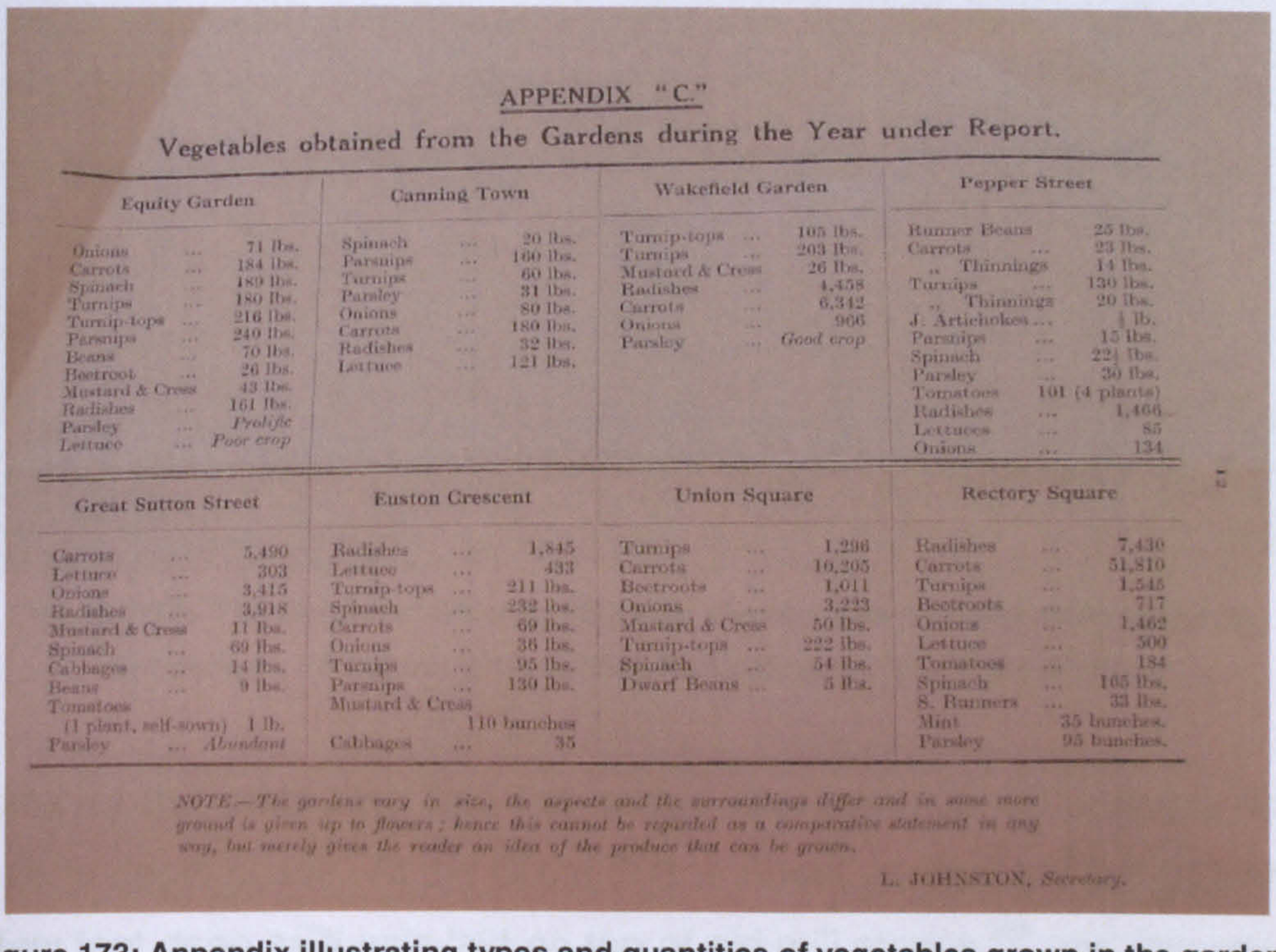


Figure 172: ' A Corner of Rectory Square Garden' (Source: *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1937,* Cover), younger siblings watching their older sister gardening.

The family of the children who were allocated a plot would also have benefited from the produce that was grown by the children. These crops, although grown on a very small scale, were recognised to 'form a

welcome addition to the family menu'.[731] The London Children's Gardens Fund 1934 Annual Report includes an appendix outlining the vegetables grown in the eight different gardens and the quantities of each achieved (Figure 173).



APPENDIX "C."

Vegetables obtained from the Gardens during the Year under Report.

Equity Garden		Canning Town		Wakefield Garden		Pepper Street	
Onions ...	71 lbs.	Spinach ...	20 lbs.	Turnip-tops ...	105 lbs.	Runner Beans	25 lbs.
Carrots ...	184 lbs.	Parsnips ...	160 lbs.	Turnips ...	203 lbs.	Carrots ...	23 lbs.
Spinach ...	189 lbs.	Turnips ...	60 lbs.	Mustard & Cress	26 lbs.	,, Thinnings	14 lbs.
Turnips ...	180 lbs.	Parsley ...	31 lbs.	Radishes ...	4,458	Turnips ...	130 lbs.
Turnip-tops ...	216 lbs.	Onions ...	80 lbs.	Carrots ...	6,342	,, Thinnings	20 lbs.
Parsnips ...	240 lbs.	Carrots ...	180 lbs.	Onions ...	966	J. Artichokes ...	¼ lb.
Beans ...	70 lbs.	Radishes ...	32 lbs.	Parsley ...	*Good crop*	Parsnips ...	15 lbs.
Beetroot ...	26 lbs.	Lettuce ...	121 lbs.			Spinach ...	22½ lbs.
Mustard & Cress	43 lbs.					Parsley ...	30 lbs.
Radishes ...	161 lbs.					Tomatoes	101 (4 plants)
Parsley ...	*Prolific*					Radishes ...	1,466
Lettuce ...	*Poor crop*					Lettuces ...	85
						Onions ...	134

Great Sutton Street		Euston Crescent		Union Square		Rectory Square	
Carrots ...	5,490	Radishes ...	1,845	Turnips ...	1,296	Radishes ...	7,436
Lettuce ...	303	Lettuce ...	433	Carrots ...	10,205	Carrots ...	51,810
Onions ...	3,415	Turnip-tops ...	211 lbs.	Beetroots ...	1,011	Turnips ...	1,545
Radishes ...	3,918	Spinach ...	232 lbs.	Onions ...	3,223	Beetroots ...	717
Mustard & Cress	11 lbs.	Carrots ...	69 lbs.	Mustard & Cress	50 lbs.	Onions ...	1,462
Spinach ...	69 lbs.	Onions ...	36 lbs.	Turnip-tops ...	222 lbs.	Lettuce ...	500
Cabbages ...	14 lbs.	Turnips ...	95 lbs.	Spinach ...	54 lbs.	Tomatoes ...	184
Beans ...	9 lbs.	Parsnips ...	130 lbs.	Dwarf Beans ...	5 lbs.	Spinach ...	165 lbs.
Tomatoes (1 plant, self-sown)	1 lb.	Mustard & Cress	110 bunches			S. Runners ...	33 lbs.
Parsley ...	*Abundant*	Cabbages ...	35			Mint	35 bunches.
						Parsley	95 bunches.

NOTE.—The gardens vary in size, the aspects and the surroundings differ and in some more ground is given up to flowers; hence this cannot be regarded as a comparative statement in any way, but merely gives the reader an idea of the produce that can be grown.

L. JOHNSTON, *Secretary.*

Figure 173: Appendix illustrating types and quantities of vegetables grown in the gardens of the LCFG (Source: London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934, p. 12).

This appendix is a valuable resource into the types of vegetables that could be grown on these wasteland gardens and the volumes that could be achieved. Onions, carrots, spinach, beans, turnips, beetroot, parsley, radish and mustard and cress were all popular, with some gardens also growing lettuce, tomatoes, mint and parsnips. The quantities produced are also indicative of the enthusiasm of the children and perhaps also the dedication of the teacher. Rectory Square, which as has been discussed earlier, was under the care of the particularly talented horticulturalist Miss Hoare, produced a staggering 51,810 carrots and 163lbs of spinach in a single year. It is striking that the potato, an easy growing staple crop, was not grown. However, this wide-growing vegetable was perhaps not deemed suitable for the small plots (Figure 174). Each plot was

[731] *Country Life,* 23 August 1913, p. 251.

approximately six feet by three feet,[732] and was fittingly described as being little more than 'a dog's grave'.[733]

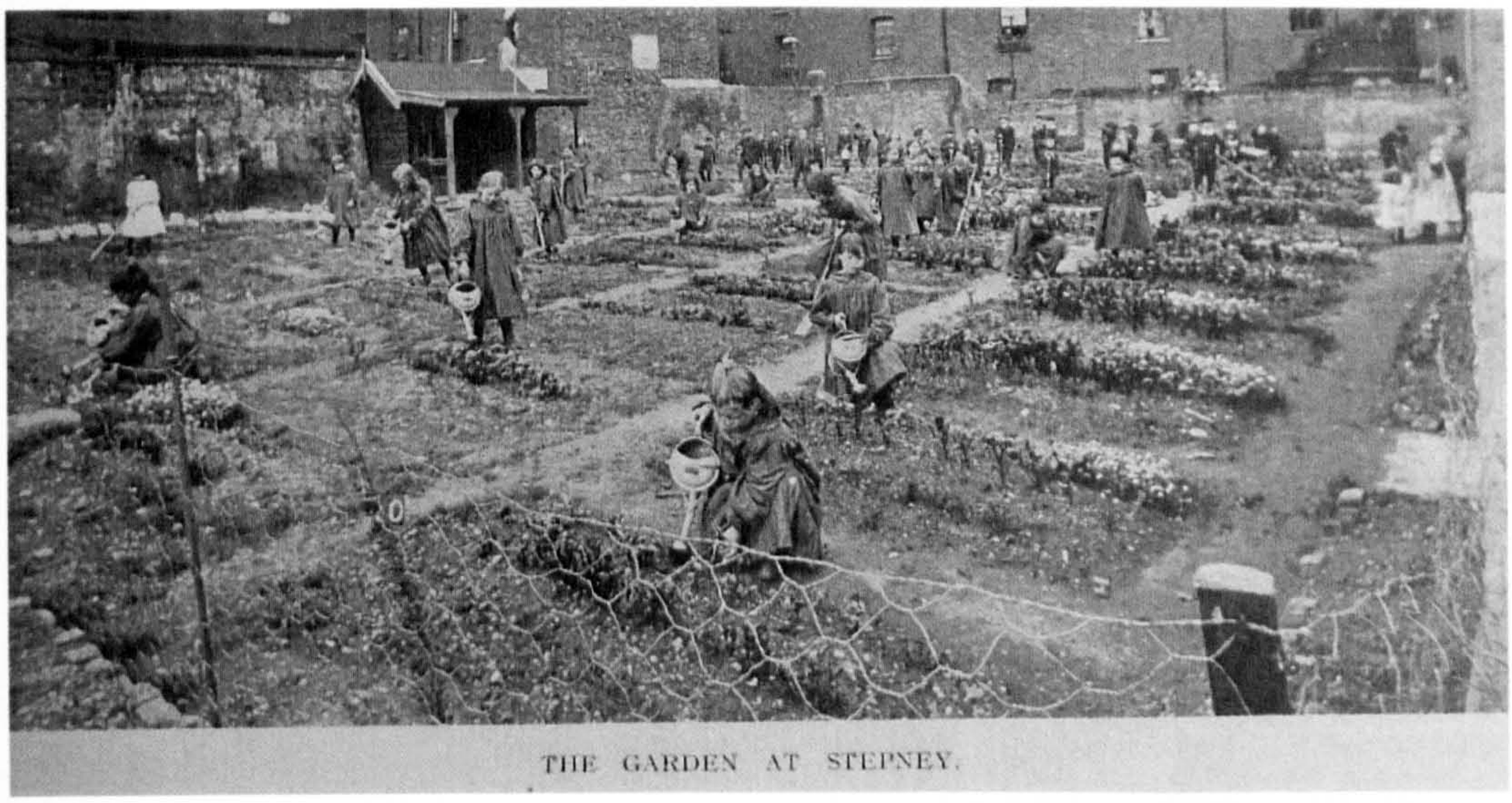


Figure 174: 'The Garden at Stepney' (Source: *Country Life* 'Little Gardens for Little Londoners', 23 August 1913, p. 252), illustrating the 'dog's grave' plots.

Some of the plots also had the added disadvantage of having a very shallow depth of soil. At the Great Sutton Street garden, the soil was only a few feet deep as it was laid on top of old mill stones,[734] and this would also have had implications in the choice of crops grown.

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[732] *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.
[733] Sharp, p. 179.
[734] *London Children's Gardens Fund Annual Report 1934*, p. 6.

6.4 The Decline of the London Children's Gardens Fund

The LCGF was to exist for thirty-five years. At the time of its creation in the early 1900s, circumstances were ripe for such a scheme to be developed. These included a combination of the popularity of philanthropy, dense inner city over-crowding, a glut of abandoned building sites and lack of government provision for the poor. As this situation changed towards the middle of the twentieth century so the LCGF began to diminish. By the mid 1930s, the LCGF was beginning to lose its gardens as they were acquired for building purposes and in 1934 both the Wakefield Garden and Pepper Street Garden were reclaimed for this reason.[735] Three years later the Fund was amalgamated with the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association.[736] It was, however, World War II that was to spell the final end for the LCGF. There is evidence to suggest that some of the gardens were taken over to be used as allotments from the end of 1939,[737] whilst others were dug up to create air-raid shelters, used by the Fire Brigade, taken over by the military or bombed during enemy action.[738]

By the end of the war it was agreed that 'the work of the London Children's Gardens Fund should be wound up'.[739] Not only were many of the gardens destroyed, but the committee members realised that the social circumstances that inspired the creation of the Fund were no longer in existence and their work was redundant: 'it was with real regret they came to the conclusion they could no longer be of use to the Children of London'.[740] It was agreed that the equipment and remaining spaces should be taken over by the MPGA who would maintain them as open spaces. It is perhaps fitting that the organisation that paved the way for the LCGF should be the one to take over its gardens.

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[735] Ibid., p4
[736] Correspondence from the Secretary of The London Children's Gardens Society to Lady Lyons, 11 May 1937 (Source: Guildhall Ref: 22297) and minutes of Amalgamation Meeting.
[737] London Children's Gardens Fund Cashbook November 1939 onwards.
[738] Undated letter (circa Mid 1940s?) from Mrs Lindsay to Lady Lyons (Vice President of the LCGF).
[739] Memo confirming resolution at a meeting of the General Committee 22 March 1946.
[740] Ibid.

It has been suggested that although the LCFG provided children with a pleasurable pastime, it was of no educational use. Sharp states, 'there is outwardly very little that is educational in this very delightful adventure'.[741] However, this was clearly not the case. There is much evidence to suggest that the Fund provided children living in inner London with a unique opportunity to gain some horticultural training that may have allowed them to gain a potential recreational activity or indeed a means of employment for later life. The scheme also provided the opportunity for the children to develop their writing skills, gain physical exercise, develop social skills, have a safe place to be outside of school and grow food for the family table. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* in 1921 summed up the work of the Fund, confirming as has been established here that they did 'an incalculable amount of good, physically, morally, and mentally, among the children of the poor districts of London'.[742]

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[741] Sharp, p. 180.
[742] *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.

6.5 The Depiction of Gardens in Ornamental Hospital Tile Panels for Children

As well a philanthropic schemes such as the LCGF, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed the introduction of the provision of hospital treatment for children in London, and this was largely due to philanthropy. Within these hospitals, many of the children's wards featured decorative ceramic tile panels which often utilised the image of the garden as a means of encouraging the recovery of the child patients. Somewhat surprisingly, there has been little previous research into either the tile panels or indeed children's hospitals of this period. Research into the benefits of hospital arts, a classification into which the tile panels would comfortably fall, has been described as, 'scant',[743] and 'the development of the children's hospital has received systematic appraisal from neither historians of pediatrics [sic] nor historians of medicine and medical institutions'.[744] Therefore, the latter part of this chapter will begin to address the balance by exploring the inspiration behind the tile panels. This includes not only artistic movements but also developments in attitudes towards children and medical advances during the period. Also explored is how popular the image of the garden itself was within these panels, which is achieved by examining the research into seven London Hospitals as well as further examples outside of the capital. This chapter also considers whether there were links between the installation of hospital panels and the provision of any outside space for the young patient, and finally assesses whether the image of the garden was purposefully utilised to aid the psychological and physiological recovery of the children who were hospitalised within wards that contained tile panels.

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[743] Hosking, Sarah and Haggard, Liz, *Healing the Hospital Environment* (Spon, 1999), p. 128.
[744] Seidler, Eduard, 'An Historical Survey of Children's Hospitals', *The Hospital in History* Ed Granshaw, L, and Porter, R (Routledge, 1989), p. 181.

6.6 The Development of Ceramics for Children

It was not until the late Victorian period that interior decorative items were specifically designed for children. Pottery was a particularly popular decorative item for children. It was cheap to produce, in part due to production advances such as transfer printing and improved transport links, and, as was the case with children's literature as explored in Chapter 3, manufacturers were quick to recognise a new potential market in children.[745] Plates and mugs decorated with nursery scenes were common, and often depicted the characters of popular children's illustrators such as Beatrix Potter (Figure 175), Kate Greenaway and Mabel Lucie Attwell.

Figure 175: Plate from Grimwades Tea Set (Source: Author's Photograph from Beatrix Potter in the Garden Exhibition, Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, 2005)

Pottery manufacturers also produced ceramic tiles. These were used extensively during the Victorian and Edwardian period for both practical and decorative purposes. Usually six inches square, ceramic tiles proved to be an attractive, hard-wearing, washable and hygienic medium. Tiles

[745] Flick, Pauline, *Children's China* (Constable, 1983), p. 16.

appeared throughout the children's areas of the home, for example in nursery fireplaces, washstands, skirtings and bathroom walls.

Figure 176: Little Red Riding Hood Series, Josiah Wedgwood circa 1880 (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, Photographed by Author). The first three tiles of the series featuring the landscape, reflect the renewed interest in nature for designers.

Popular subjects for tiles included the seasons, the months, and fairy tales. An example of a group of tiles depicting fairy tales is 'Little Red Riding Hood' (Figure 176), which also clearly demonstrate the popularity of the depiction of nature, landscape and gardens in children's pottery ware:

> Nature was an important source of ideas for the tile designer…There was a new interest in nature, for Constable had opened people's eyes to the beauty of the English landscape and art critics such as Ruskin encouraged the artist to study nature and draw inspiration from it. Many parks were laid out in nineteenth century towns, bringing a touch of the countryside into the industrial cities.[746]

The relationship between the park and the town has already been explored in Chapter 2, but it is interesting to note how this overlapped with the development of art theories of the time and how this in turn influenced the prevalence of the depiction of nature in early children's pottery ware. John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) was an art critic and theorist

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[746] Van Lemmen, Hans *Tiles: A Collectors Guide* (Souvenir Press, 1979 ([reference from 1990 edition]), p. 53.

who strongly criticised the old masters for their lack of attention to nature and advocated that artists should work directly from nature. With his rejection of the post-Industrial Revolution's mechanisation and standardisation of architecture together with his strong support and high praise of the Gothic style, Ruskin was highly influential in the establishment of the Pre-Raphelite Movement - a group of seven young Victorian English painters and sculptors including Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 82) and John Millais (1829-96) [747]- which in turn developed into the Arts and Crafts movement. A key figure in the Arts and Crafts movement was William Morris (1834-96) who, like Ruskin, was 'appalled by the deadening effect of industrialisation',[748] and consequently established his famous design company that embraced the arts of stained glass, embroidery, wallpaper, furniture design, tapestry and tiles.[749] Morris developed an early appreciation of nature and inherited his father's fascination for the Middle Ages, and both these factors hugely influenced his subsequent designs. [750] Morris's designs, particularly those for fabric and wallpaper, are perhaps best known for heavily featuring nature, and this also extended to tile panels.[751]

primrose

Figure 177: Primrose Tile designed by William Morris 1862-1865. (Source: Zachzek, Iain, *Essential William Morris*), p. 82. An example of a Victorian tile influenced by nature.

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[747] Read, Herbert (Editor), *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Thames and Hudson, 1985), p. 269.
[748] Read, p. 234.
[749] Zaczek, Iain, *Essential William Morris* (Paragon, 2000), p. 6.
[750] Ibid., p. 7.
[751] For further details on William Morris' tiles see: Myers, Richard and Hilary, *William Morris Tiles* (Richard Dennis, 1996).

Nature was clearly already established as an inspirational subject for tile design, and it was also regarded as particularly suitable visual imagery for children. During the late nineteenth century, the architect Colonel W Edis, who wrote a series of lectures for the Society of Arts in London on the decoration of town houses. These were published in 1881, and in them Edis stated that walls for children should be decorated with 'flowers and all other things which are beautiful'.[752] Such decoration was, as shall be explored, to extend beyond the home and into hospitals for children.

[752] Edis, R W *The Decoration and Furniture of Town Houses* (Kegan Paul & Co, 1881), p. 228.

6.7 Hospitals for Children

There were no specialised hospitals for children until the opening of London's Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1851, despite the fact that of the 50,000 people dying annually in London, some 21,000 were under the age of ten.[753] Possible reasons for the delay in establishing a hospital for children may be that nursing a sick child was deemed the responsibility of the parents and that traditionally hospital care 'did not reach beyond the useful citizen, the productive member of society'.[754] As has been explored throughout this thesis, from the mid-nineteenth century children became increasingly recognised as citizens in their own right and 'the bearers of its [the nation's] hopes for the future',[755] and as a consequence medical facilities were provided for them, first by philanthropists and subsequently by the government. However, these new children's hospitals were not created just for the sole purpose of aiding sick children, but rather to benefit society as a whole. It was recognised that a sick child was:

> a burden to their parents who have no leisure to tend them, no means to minister to their wants. The one sick child weighs down the whole family; it keeps the father poor, the home wretched. The little one lives on in sadness, and dies in sorrow; a sorrow broken only by a strange gladness which even the mother can scarcely repress when the burden is removed, and the sick child is taken where it will be sick no more.[756]

By 1888 another thirty-eight children's hospitals had been created in Britain,[757] a trend that was to continue. Many more hospitals were built or extended to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria at the end of the nineteenth century, as, 'rather than any memorial to herself, the Queen wanted the money that was raised to be given to hospitals, the clergy , the old and to children'.[758]

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[753] West, Charles, *How to Nurse Sick Children* (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854), p. 77.
[754] Ibid., p. 5.
[755] Seidler, p. 182.
[756] West, p. 4.
[757] Richardson, Harriet, *English Hospitals 1660-1948* (Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England, 1998), p. 110.
[758] Collett-White, James, 'Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Bedfordshire, 1897', *Bedfordshire Magazine*, Volume 26, No 201, Summer 1997.

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[756] West, p. 4.
[757] Richardson, Harriet, *English Hospitals 1660-1948* (Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England, 1998), p. 110.
[758] Collett-White, James, 'Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Bedfordshire, 1897', *Bedfordshire Magazine,* Volume 26, No 201, Summer 1997.

The design of many of the hospitals during this period was partly inspired by the medical philosophies of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910). In her book, *Notes on Nursing,* she advocated the benefits of fresh air and sunlight to a patient's recovery.[759] Hospital design embodied her recommendations through the creation of 'pavilion' hospitals.[760] Pavilion hospitals were revolutionary in their design and featured 'Nightingale Wards'. These wards were designed to run perpendicularly to the main corridor and thereby substantially increased the amount of fresh air and light received in each particular ward. Often the children's wards during this period, like their adult counterparts, would also feature access to a garden, terrace or veranda as a means of affording the patients optimum access to fresh air and sunlight. Although Nightingale's theories appear to be a precursor for the open-air theories explored throughout this thesis, it should be made clear that Nightingale was a proponent of the 'miasmatic theory' (also known as 'germ theory') that advocated that certain diseases were caused by bad air and that germs were spread through the air and it was her concern about preventing the spread of germs that inspired her theories regarding fresh air. As was explored in Chapter Two in relation to the provision of fresh water for the working classes, John Snow disproved this theory in 1854 by proving that cholera was spread through water. However, the design for the 'Nightingale Wards' were perfectly designed to be easily adapted to accommodate the early twentieth century theories regarding the role that exposure to sunlight and fresh air could play in the recovery of those suffering from tuberculosis.[761]

For economic reasons, the construction of the majority of children's hospitals was a simple brick building with a plain interior. An increased

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[759] Nightingale, Florence, *Notes on Nursing* (Harrison & Son, 1858 [reference from 1980 Edition published by Churchill Livingstone), p. 6 and p. 69.
[760] A full account of Pavilion Hospitals can be found in Taylor, Jeremy, *The Architect and the Pavilion Hospital* (Leicester University Press, 1997).
[761] The relationship between Nightingale and the miasmatic theory was kindly brought to the author's attention by Dr Clare Hickman, and is further explored in her PhD thesis, *"Vis Medicatrix Naturae": The Design and Use of Landscapes in England for Therapeutic Purposes Since 1800* (Bristol University, 2006).

understanding of the importance of hygiene[762] within the hospital environment contributed to the construction of more hygienic buildings. Ceramic tiles, which were inexpensive, hard-wearing and easy to clean, proved an ideal medium and were used extensively inside and outside of the new hospitals. Although economy necessitated plain design in many areas, the children's wards were often adorned with ceramic pictures formed by panels of tiles, some of which were exquisitely decorated and many of which featured gardens or references to nature and the landscape.

At first glance, it might appear that the panels were an unnecessary expense in the otherwise frugal design of the hospitals. However, the tiles were often gifts to the hospital by bereaved wealthy parents who wanted to commemorate their child in some way, or were sponsored by philanthropic supporters of the hospital. At their simplest they consisted of six inch square tiles that were repeated around the walls of the ward to create a dado (Figure 178). An example of this was at The Royal Gwent Hospital, were ten different illustrated tiles were used in a repeated pattern and placed at a child's head height (Figure 179).

Figure 178: 6 x 6 inch Tile of Little Bo Peep, Royal Gwent Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at site). This tile would have formed part of a repeat pattern around the walls of the children's ward to create a dado.

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[762] As illustrated in the passing of various Public General Acts, mostly predominantly concerned with hygiene in relation to containing and preventing contagious diseases. These included the Public Health act of 1875; Metropolis Management and Building Act of 1882; Diseases Prevention (Metropolis) Act 1883; Epidemic and Other Diseases Prevention Act of 1883; Infectious Disease Prevention Act of 1890; Public Health (London) Act of 1891; Public Health Acts Amendment Act of 19907 and Housing, Town Planning Act of 1909.

Figure 179: Detail of postcard showing Children's Ward at Royal Gwent Hospital depicting the dado of single tiles around the ward (Source: Dawson, A, *Archive Photographs Series, Newport*)

At the other extreme, many tiles could be use to create one large decorative panel, such as the 'Cinderella and Glass Shoe' panel in the Bedford General Hospital, which is six feet square and comprises of one hundred and forty-four tiles (Figure 180).

Figure 180: Cinderella and the Glass Shoe, Victoria Ward, Bedford General Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at Site). The panel comprises of one hundred and forty-four tiles to form a six feet square image.

The subject of the tile illustrations was diverse, although nursery rhymes and fairy tales were the most popular. However, local scenes that were perceived as perhaps appealing to local children; illustrations from popular children's books such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan,* and even royal portraits were also depicted.

In excess of eighty British Victorian and Edwardian hospitals featured tile panels, and the majority of these were created for child patients. John Greene is one of the few researchers to have investigated the history and existence of the tile panels, and has compiled a catalogue of them.[763] Greene states that his motivation for recording the panels was that he 'was becoming increasingly concerned about the disappearance of a number of features of architectural and historic interest because of the reconstruction of wards, closure of hospitals and demolition of buildings'.[764] His seminal book and subsequent articles in the Tiles and Ceramic Society's publication, *Glazed Expressions,*[765] represents the only extensive research identified during this study on hospital ceramic tiles. Although Greene's pioneering research has proved an invaluable resource, providing a 'comprehensive record'[766] of the location and content of the tiles, it offers no analysis of the images contained therein.

For this chapter the ceramic tile panels of nine hospitals, six of which are London hospitals, and one miniature model hospital, were researched.[767] Of these, only Paddington Green and the Waterloo hospitals were created solely for the treatment of children, whilst the others were general hospitals that included a children's ward. In five of these hospitals (Bedford General, King's Fund Miniature, Paddington Green Royal Berkshire and St Mary's) at least some of the panels are still in situ,

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[763] Greene, John, *Brightening the Long Days* (Alan Sutton, 1987).
[764] Ibid., Cover notes p xiii.
[765] *Glazed Expressions* No 9, Spring 1985, p2 and No 26, Spring 1993, pp. 1-2.
[766] Greene, Cover notes p. xiii.
[767] The hospitals researched for this study were: Bedford General Hospital, Bedford; Ealing Hospital, London (formerly Ealing King Edward Hospital); King's Fund Miniature Hospital (now at the Science Museum); Moorfield's Eye Hospital, London; Paddington Green Children's Hospital, London; Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading; Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport; Royal Waterloo Hospital for Children and Women, London; St Mary's Hospital, London and St Thomas' Hospital, London.

although at Paddington Green and St Mary's they are no longer visible as they have been covered over with boards and plaster. The remaining five hospitals have had their panels removed, due to either total demolition or modernisation of the wards, but have had them re-sited in either the same modernised hospital, or one close by.

Appendix A contains a spreadsheet of the ceramic tile panels in the ten hospitals researched that are still in existence and could be photographed for this study. The spreadsheet lists each hospital individually and records the title of the panel, its manufacturer, the approximate date of installation, and the current (and if relevant original) location of the tile panel. The spreadsheet also records whether the tile panel featured a garden directly or by reference, and whether the ward that the panel was in originally had access to a garden, terrace or veranda. Between 80-90% of the panels photographed featured a garden or a garden reference, and in nine of the ten hospitals there is evidence that the children's ward had direct access to outside space. In the one instance where there is no evidence (Moorfield's), staff at the hospital believe that there was a garden at the former hospital, but no archival evidence was found at this stage to substantiate this claim, nor to establish whether this could have been accessed directly from the children's ward.

Appendix A therefore clearly confirms that the garden was a popular image within the hospital tile panels for children, and that where these tiles were utilised, there was usually also access to exterior space. The garden, and references to it, was depicted in a variety of ways which will now be explored.

6.8 The Prevalence of the Image of the Garden in Hospital Tile Panels With Particular Reference to St Thomas' Hospital, London

The largest group collection of tile panels researched during this chapter are the Doulton panels that are currently on view at St Thomas' Hospital in London, and these panels originate from three sources. The majority were originally situated in the Lilian and Seymour children's wards of St Thomas' before they were demolished, whilst the others were transferred from the nearby Waterloo Hospital for Children when it was closed down. Of the forty Doulton panels on view at St Thomas' Hospital, thirty-four feature a garden or landscape. The themes of the panels are nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Not only is this an apt theme for a children's ward, but it is also a subject that lends itself to the depiction of nature. The panel of 'Little Red Riding Hood' features a domestic country cottage, complete with clearly identifiable pink roses and marigolds (Figure 181).

Figure 181: 'Little Red Riding Hood' by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Author's Photograph, taken at St Thomas' Hospital).

Two further panels which were obviously part of the same series as 'Little Red Riding Hood' given the similarity in style and design, depict rural scenes. Once again these panels feature clearly identifiable plants; such as the brambles and ferns in 'Little Bo Peep' (Figure 182) and the daisies and cow parsley in 'Little Miss Muffet' (Figure 183).

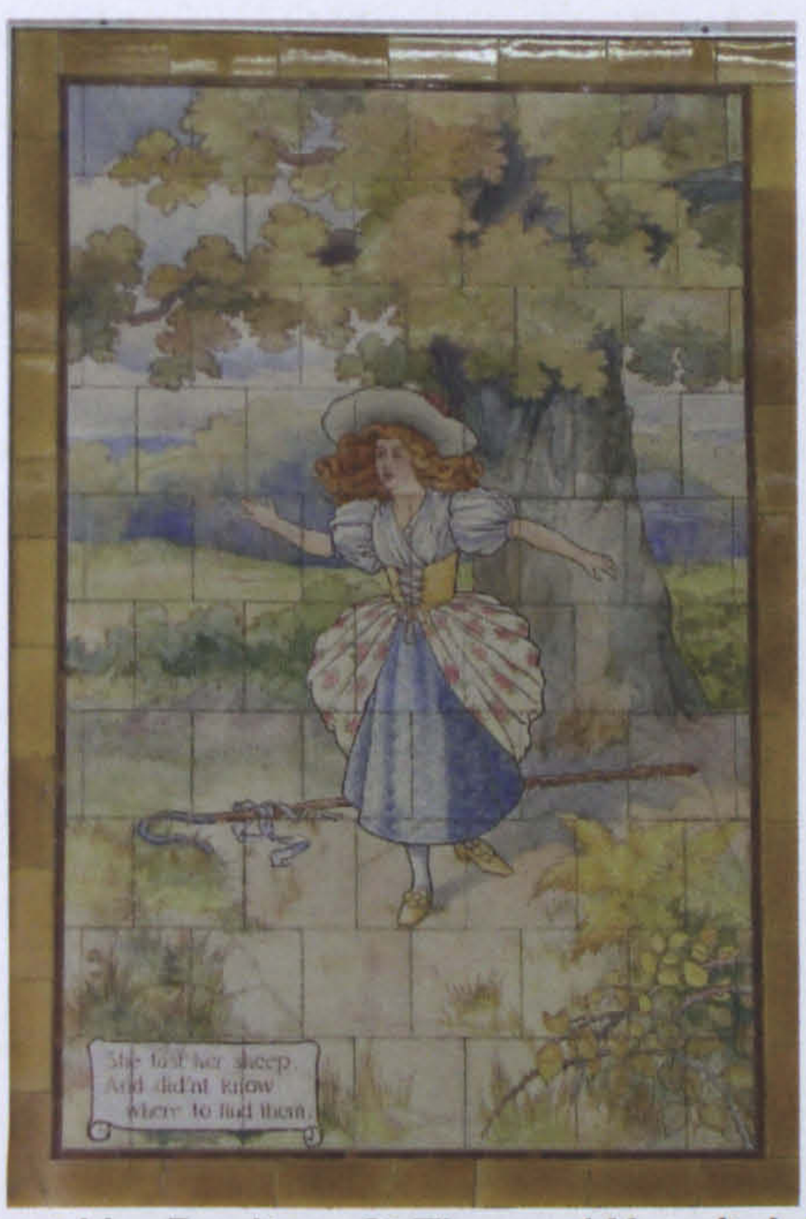

Figure 182: 'Little Bo Peep' by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, *London* (*Source*: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

Figure 183: 'Little Miss Moffet' by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

A fourth example of the panels featuring nature at St Thomas' is another depiction of 'Little Bo Peep' (Figure 184). Again this features the landscape and identifiable flowers in the form of daisies, but this panel is clearly not part of the same sequence as those previously referred to. It also bears the inscription 'The Gift of James S Holliday' and is therefore obviously an example of a panel donated to the hospital.

Figure 184: 'Little Bo Peep' (2) by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

The tile panels at St Thomas' were either designed as a series of images, or as an individual, stand-alone panel. Of the six panels at St Thomas' that do not feature a landscape or make any reference to one, five belong to a 'series' of other tile panels. In every case, a landscape, or at the very least some reference to one, is depicted in at least one or more of the panel series. An example of this is the three panel series of 'Cinderella'.

The first (Figure 185) and last (Figure 186) panels of this three part series are set within Cinderella's home and feature neither a garden nor a reference to one. However, it is interesting to note that Cinderella is depicted wearing a green dress in both of these panels, which may be interpreted as being an attempt to incorporate an obvious reference to nature in a picture that was otherwise void of one.

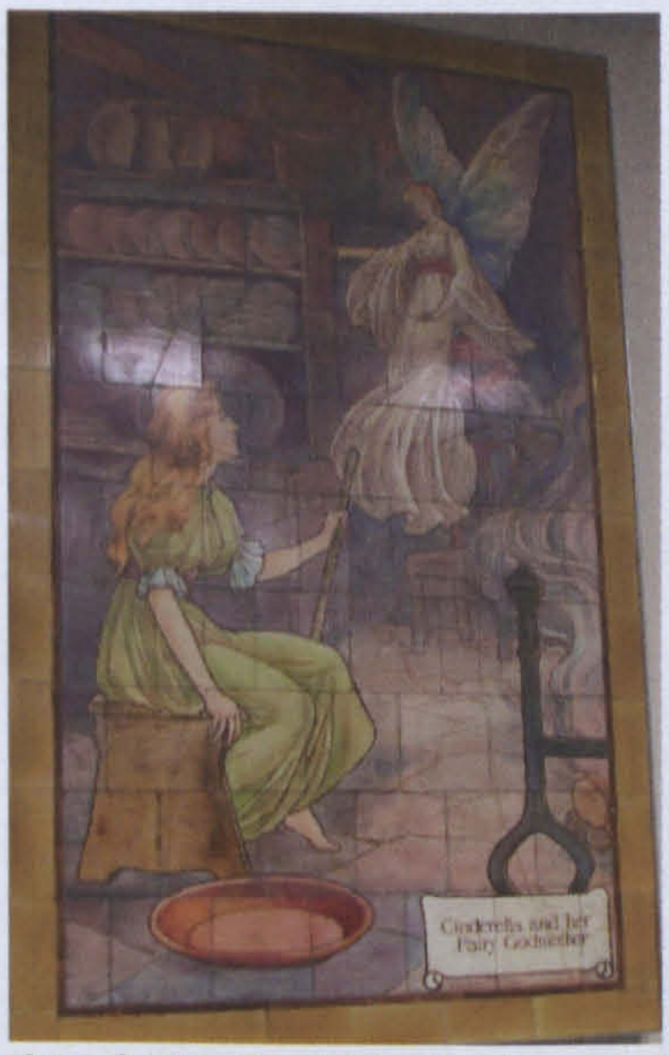

Figure 185: Cinderella Panel 1 of 3 by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

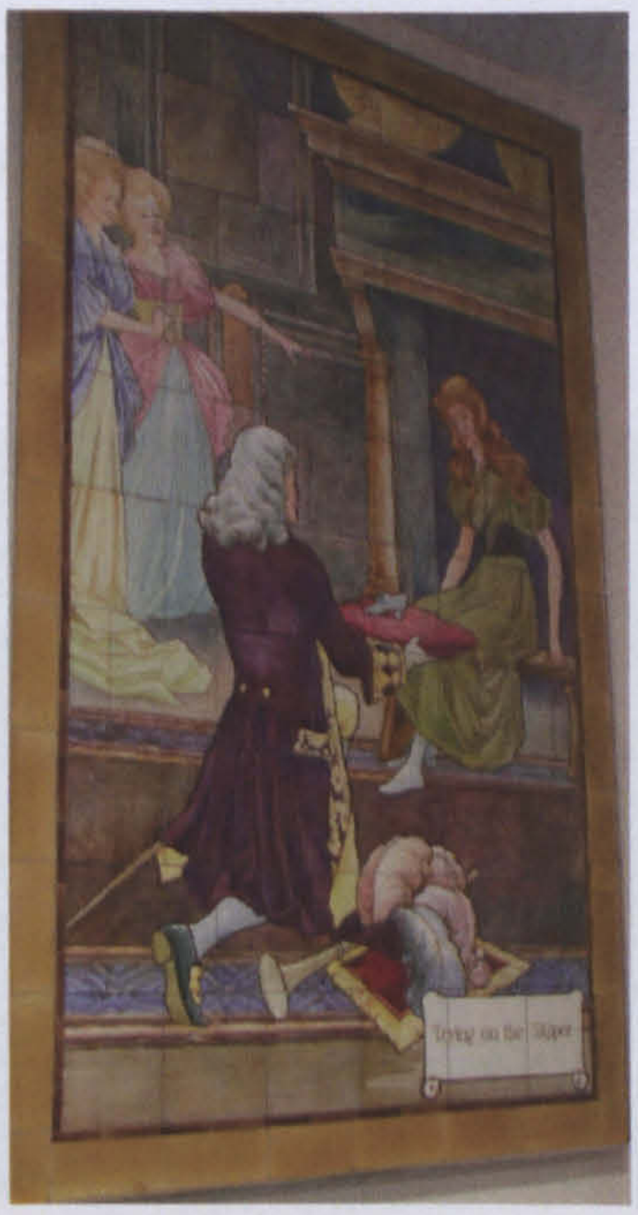

Figure 186: Cinderella Panel 3 of 3 by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas Hospital)

However, in the middle panel, which depicts Cinderella leaving the ball at the stroke of midnight, Cinderella is shown on the steps outside the palace with a glimpse of the garden beyond the balustrade (Figure 187).

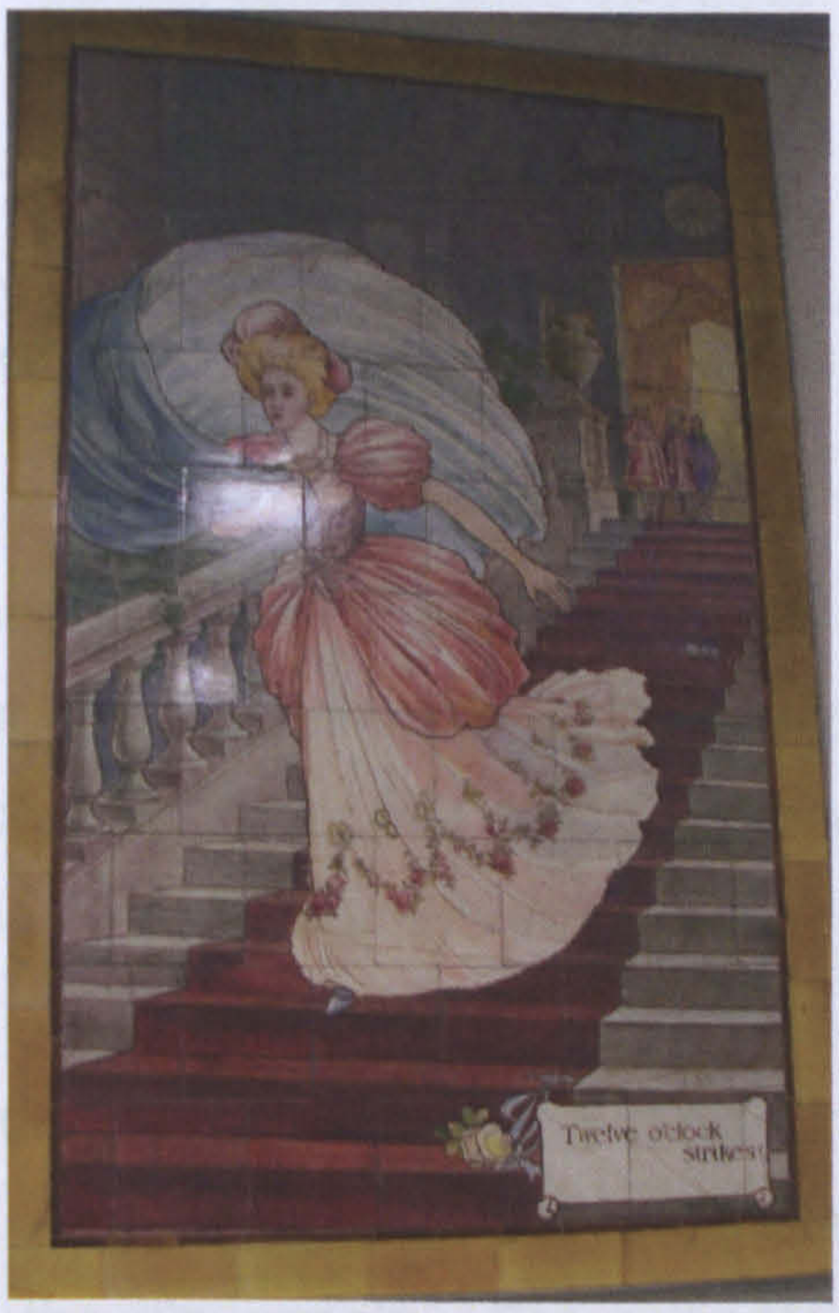

Figure 187: Cinderella Panel 2 of 3 by Doutlon, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital).

Furthermore, Cinderella's dress is decorated with swags of roses (Figure 188), and on the steps is a rose which she has presumably dropped in her haste (Figure 189).

Figure 188: Detail of Cinderella's Dress from Panel 2 of Cinderella Series by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

Figure 189: Detail of Cinderella's Dropped Rose from Panel 2 of Cinderella Series by Doulton, St Thomas' Hospital, London (Source: Author's Photograph taken at St Thomas' Hospital)

It is evident that Cinderella, the heroine of the fairy tale, had been given symbols by the artist of being linked to gardens and nature; her original green dress, the decoration of her ball gown, the rose she carries and the gardens of the palace she will soon live in.

However, these Cinderella panels are very subtle in their use of garden and nature imagery; the pictorial reference to a garden was usually much more explicit within the tile panels. For example at Bedford Hospital several of the panels clearly depicted domestic garden scenes, often from a bygone era (Figure 190).

Figure 190: 'Mistress Mary', 'Hush A Bye Baby' and 'Goosey Gander', Victoria Ward, Bedford General Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at Bedford Hospital)

Although the tile panels at Bedford Hospital are from hospital outside of London, they were, like those at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, manufactured by a London pottery.

6.9 Reasons for the Popularity of the Image of Gardens in Hospital Tile Panels

It is evident that gardens were a popular and recurrent image within all the hospital tile panels and it important to ascertain why this was the case. It has been established through an examination of the writings of Florence Nightingale that the physical design of hospitals during this period were developed in accordance with her belief in the miasma theory of disease and the importance within that of the need for fresh air to prevent the supposed spread of germs through the air. Although her theories were dispelled in the mid-nineteenth century, the design of her hospital wards lent themselves perfectly to the benefits that fresh air and sunlight were discovered to have on diseases such as tuberculosis. Opportunities for patients to receive access to fresh air and sunlight were extended beyond the wards by the inclusion of access to outside space. Of the ten hospitals researched for this study, with one possible exception, plans and photographs confirm that there was direct access from the children's ward to outside space. In London this was often confined to a balcony, in contrast to hospitals outside of London where the space usually comprised of access to both the hospital gardens and a balcony.

Bedford General Hospital was set within ten acres of land.[768] Although the children's ward overlooked an ornamental garden to the left, and an open area that is possibly a lawn to the right, it also featured a balcony to the North. This can clearly be seen on the architect H Percy Adams' plan of the hospital submitted to the Borough Surveyors' Office in 1897 (Figure 191).[769]

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[768] Anon, 'The Opening of Bedford County Hospital', *The Hospital* 28 June 1899, p. 217.
[769] 1897 Plan of Bedford General Hospital by H Percy Adams, now located in Bedford County Archives.

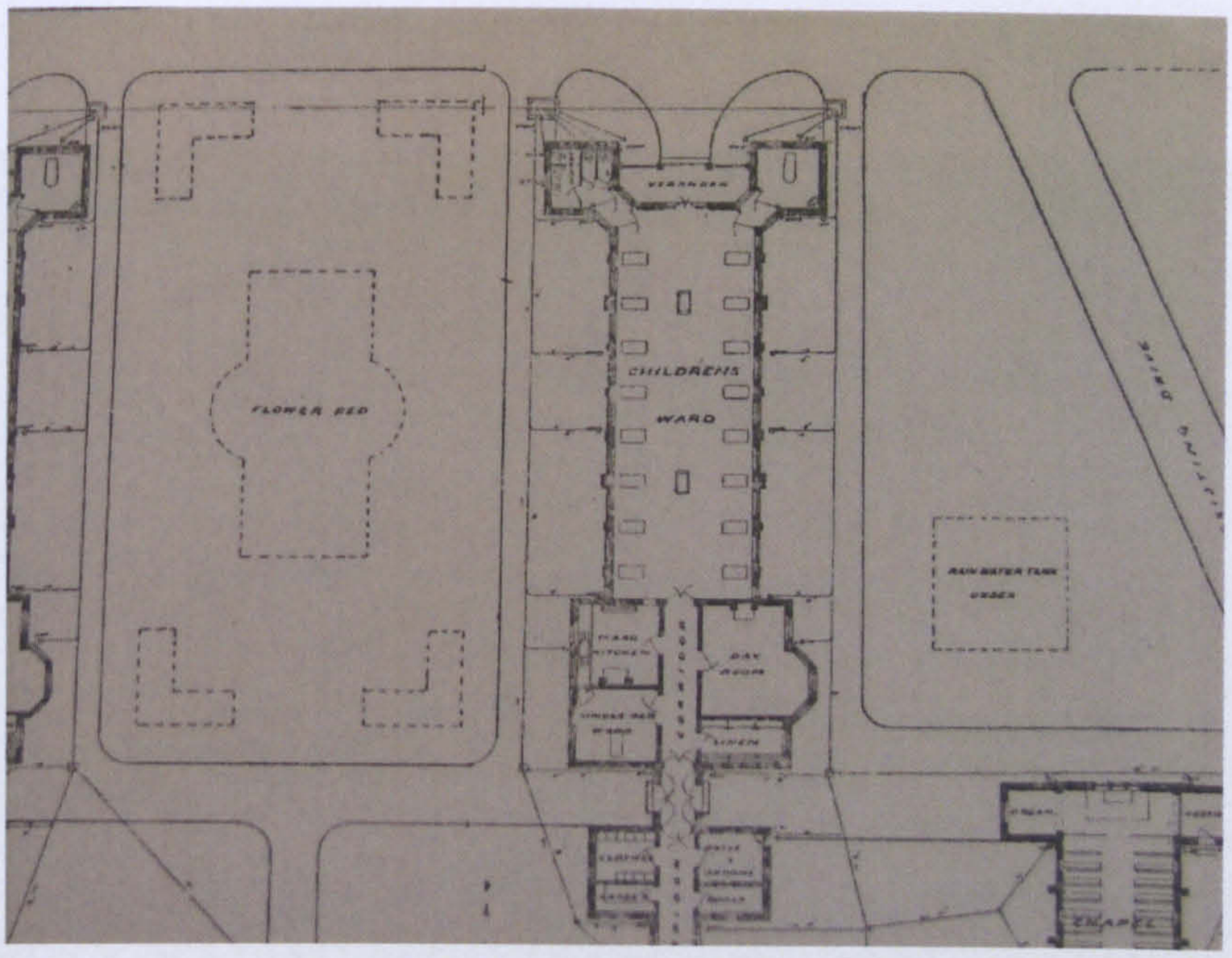

Figure 191: Detail of Architect's Plan of Bedford General Hospital circa 1897 by J H Percy Adams (Source: Bedford County Archives) showing the gardens and balcony that surrounded the children's ward.

In hospitals within London, where outside space was at a premium, balconies and terraces were created. The *1892 Report for Paddington Green Children's Hospital* illustrates such a balcony, which overlooks a small public park (Figures 192 and 193).

Figure 192: Paddington Green Children's Hospital by Stephen, Salter and Adams Architects featuring outside balconies (Source: 1892 Report for Paddington Green Children's Hospital)

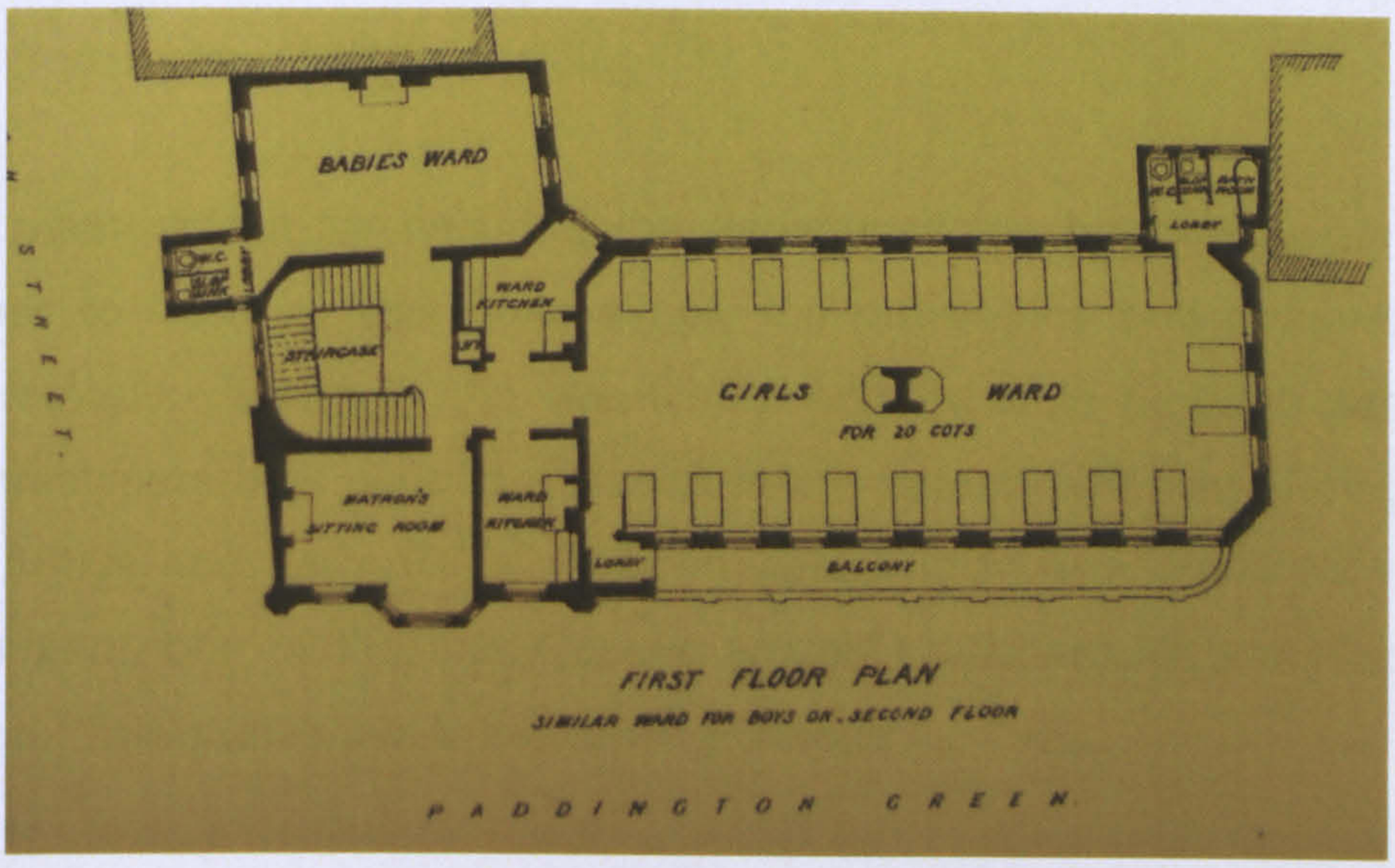

Figure 193: Plan of Paddington Green Children's Hospital by Stephen, Salter and Adams Architects showing first floor plan of ward and balcony (Source: 1892 Report for Paddington Green Children's Hospital)

In December 1881 a committee was formed[770] to select a suitable site for the new Paddington Green Children's Hospital. The houses they selected to convert into a hospital were chosen because they overlooked an open area of space known as Paddington Green (Figure 194) which the committee recognised would provide 'a plentiful supply of fresh air – which is so essential to hospital work'. [771]

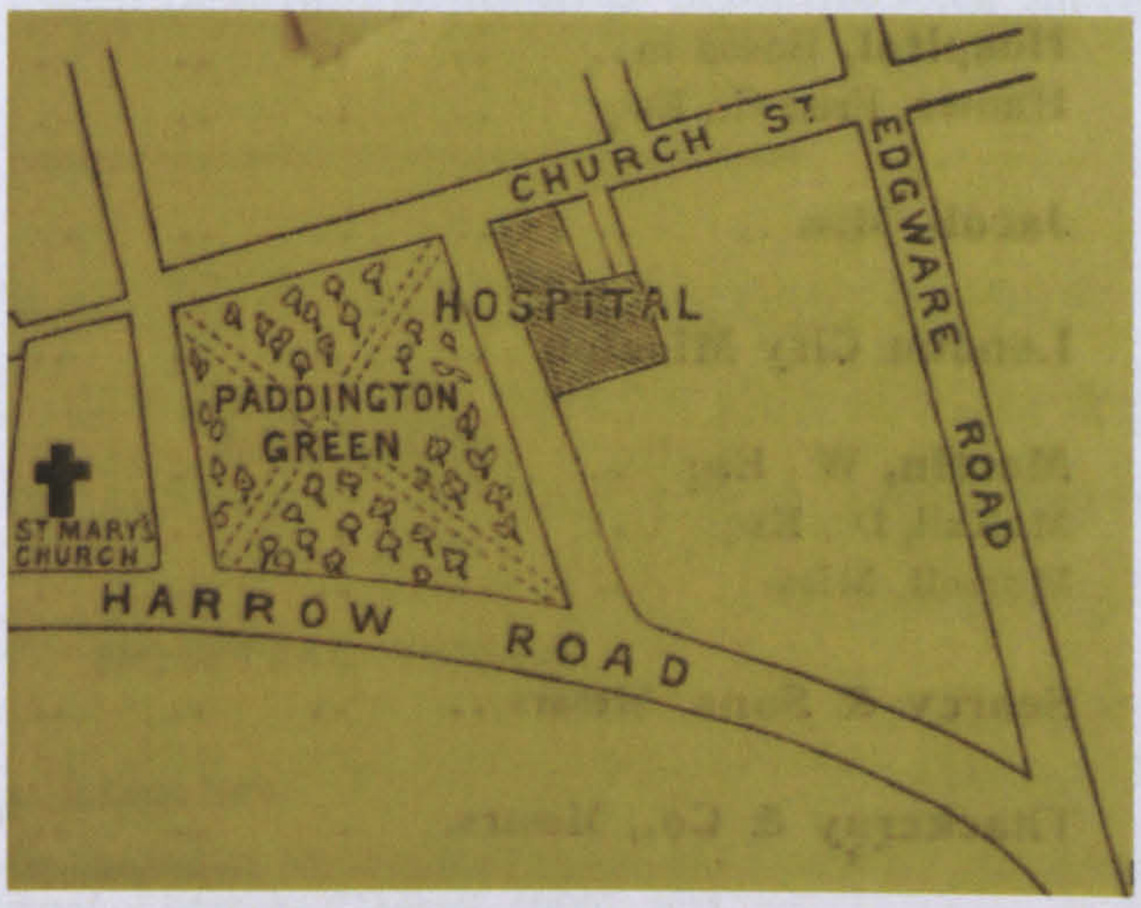

Figure 194: Plan Showing Site of Paddington Green Children's Hospital (Source: 1918 Report for Paddington Green Children's Hospital)

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[770] *Paddington Green Children's Hospital Report 1882,* p. 5.
[771] Ibid., p. 6.

The site of St Thomas' Hospital on London's South Bank also benefited not only from riverside views on the north side, but also a view of a public park from the south of the building.[772]

The main reason for ensuring the patients of the hospital wards had access to fresh air was quite simply the prevalence and treatment of tuberculosis. Living in the twenty-first century, it is perhaps easy to underestimate how serious a health threat tuberculosis was during the late 1880s and early 1900s. *Tuberculosis, Its Nature, Prevention and Treatment,* one of the many books written on tuberculosis during this period,[773] illustrates this in its opening chapter:

> Of all diseases which have wrought devastation among mankind there has never been a disease more deadly, more persistent, or more widespread, in one or other of its many clinical forms, than Tuberculosis. It is estimated that a million lives are lost by it throughout Europe; and in England and Wales alone its death roll [sic] is close upon 60,000.[774]

Major developments in treating tuberculosis were made at the start of the twentieth century, the primary one of which was that 'pure fresh air is of the utmost importance'.[775] Gardens, terraces and balconies were therefore attached to wards as a means of ensuring the patients received fresh air, which was deemed a suitable treatment for all disease, not just tuberculosis.

The Lilian Ward at St Thomas' Hospital opened in 1901. In the previous year, an article appeared in the hospital journal regarding the 'open-air' treatment of consumption.[776] The article highlights the increasing

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[772] *St Thomas's Hospital Report Vlm 32 1903,* p. 13.
[773] The Wellcome Trust Library, London, holds an extensive range of books on the treatment of tuberculosis from this period.
[774] Hillier, Alfred, *Tuberculosis Its Nature, Prevention and Treatment with Special Reference to The Open Air Treatment of Phthisis* (Cassell, 1900), p. 1.
[775] Ibid., p. 125. Numerous other examples of books advocating the treatment of tuberculosis by fresh air can be found. Examples include Pottenger, Marion, *Tuberculosis in the Child and Adult* (Henry Kimpton, 1934) and Roodhouse Gloyne, S, *Social Aspects of Tuberculosis* (Faber and Faber circa 1938).
[776] Anon, 'A Short Account of the Nordach and the "Open-Air" Treatment of Consumption', *The St Thomas's Hospital Gazette,* No 4, Vlm X, May 1900, pp. 73-81.

momentum of 'open-air' treatment: 'References are constantly made to it, not only in the medical journals, but in journals, such as in the *Nineteenth Century*, which deals with topics of general interest'.[777] It is therefore not surprising that as well as ceramic tile panels, the new Lilian Ward at St Thomas' Hospital also featured a roofed balcony (Figure 195).

Figure 195: Open-Air Balcony of Lilian Ward, St Thomas' Hospital, 1921 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives). The balcony would have ensured that the children could access fresh air in all weather conditions

Unfortunately a critic reviewing the new ward for the *St Thomas's Gazette,* pointed out that the position of the ward between two other hospital blocks together with the overhanging roof of the balcony resulted in restricted incoming light into the ward itself (Figure 196).

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[777] Ibid., p. 73.

Figure 196: Lilian Ward, St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1921 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives). It is clear from this picture that despite the large windows the ward lacked natural sunlight. This was attributed to its position between two other hospital blocks and the overhanging roof of the balcony attached to the ward.

The reviewer comments: 'The pictorial tiles in the ward are very effective, but they cannot make up for the want of sunlight'.[778] It therefore seems quite probable that the panels had been purposefully designed to feature exterior scenes partly to compensate for the lack of light created by a structure ironically devised to increase the light treatment of patients (Figure 197). Doulton, the pottery that created the tile panels at St Thomas', acknowledged in a general pamphlet regarding several of their hospital panel tile commissions, that tiles could, 'bring light and reflections into even the darkest corners'.[779] It is possible that this quote was made specifically with St Thomas' in mind.

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[778] *The St Thomas's Hospital Gazette* No 3, Volume XI, March 1901, p. 61.
[779] Doulton, *Pictures in Pottery* (De Montfort Press, 1904), p. 12.

Figure 197: Detail of Tile Panels in Lilian Ward, St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1921 (Source: London Metropolitan Archives)

As the majority of patients suffering from tuberculosis were adults,[780] it would not be unreasonable to anticipate that adult wards may also have contained ceramic panels depicting outside scenes. However, most of the tile panels catalogued by John Greene were exclusively for children's wards. Taking Bedford Hospital as an example, it is possible to compare the plainness of an adult ward (Figure 198) in comparison to the more decorative children's ward (Figure 199)

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[780] See Roodhouse Gloyne, S, *Social Aspects of Tuberculosis* for a breakdown of the ages of those suffering/dying from tuberculosis.

Figure 198: Adult Ward at Bedford General Hospital, undated (Source: Bedford County Archives)

Figure 199: Children's Ward at Bedford General Hospital, undated (Source: Bedford County Archives), clearly showing how much more decorative the children's ward was in comparison to the adult ward.

An obvious explanation for this may be found in June Jolly's book written for nurses in 1981, *The Other Side of Paediatrics: A Guide to the*

Everyday Care of Sick Children: 'Children asked about their feelings whilst in hospital often complain they miss going out of doors. Children find it very hard to have to stay in bed, and even harder, to stay indoors'.[781]

This would suggest the possibility that one of the reasons why ceramic tiles were so popular in children's wards was that they were partly designed as a consolation to children who were limited in their access to outside space due to their illness and consequential confinement. This assumption is further reinforced when one takes into account during this period the physical education of children was a matter of increasing concern, government attention and action. In 1895, physical education was included in the payments by results scheme for schools, whilst the Education Act of 1918 gave Local Education Authorities the power to promote 'physical training'.[782] Outside of school, physical activity was also encouraged by groups such as the Boy Scout Movement, established in 1908, and two years later, the Girl Guides, as was explored in the Introductory Chapter to this thesis. It may well be that children, having been encouraged to be more physically active, were frustrated by the confinements of hospital life, and this theory may offer an explanation to why several of the tile panels at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading depict children who are physically active out-of-doors whilst at work or play (Figure 200).

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[781] Jolly, June, *The Other Side of Paediatrics: A Guide to the Everyday Care of Sick Children* (MacMillan, 1981), p. 35.
[782] See McIntosh, Peter C, *Physical Education in England Since 1800* (G Bell and Sons 1968 [first printed 1952]) for further information.

Figure 200: 'Bringing Home the Milk', 'Buttercups and Daisies' and 'Bringing Home the Sheep', Ceramic Tile Panels at The Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading (Source: Author's Photographs taken at The Royal Berkshire Hospital). Country scenes such as these would have had a particular relevance for children from the country.

Similarly, the tile panels for the waiting room at Paddington Green Children's Hospital featured scenes of children enjoying outside activities in areas that would have been readily accessible and known to a local child such as Kensington Gardens (Figure 201) and Hampstead Pond (Figure 202).

Figure 201: Boys Sliding in Kensington Gardens, Paddington Green Children's Hospital (Source: St Mary's Hospital Archives). Note Kensington Palace in the background.

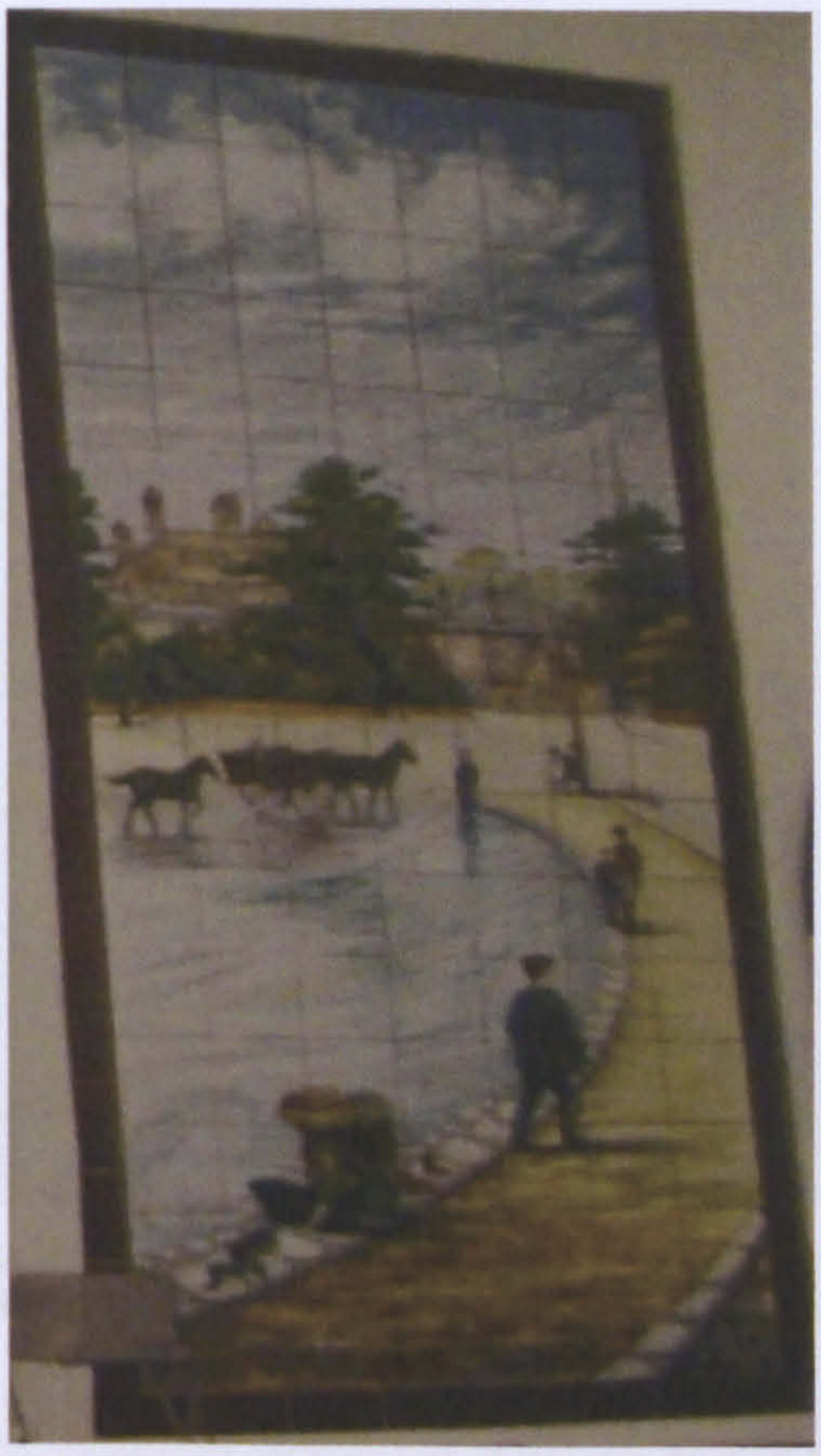

Figure 202: The Whitestone Pond, Old Hampstead, Paddington Green Children's Hospital (Source: St Mary's Hospital Archives)

The tiles featuring local scenes at Paddington Green Children's Hospital are perhaps the most unique in terms of subject matter amongst those researched, and this is predominantly because the sponsors of the panels were given free reign regarding the image on their panel.

All of the Paddington Green Children's Hospital panels that featured local scenes also contained images of children who were interacting with their environment in a way that children who saw them could probably identify. The most extreme example of this was a tile panel that portrayed a Punch and Judy show outside of the hospital itself (Figure 203).

Figure 203: Punch and Judy, Paddington Green, Tile Panel at Paddington Green Children's Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at Paddington Green Health Centre where the panel has been relocated to)

The Punch and Judy panel is of particular interest for two reasons. First, Paddington Green was directly outside of the hospital, and child patients would have been able to see it from their window or balcony. Also, the children in this panel are depicted as watching a Punch and Judy show. The *1910 Paddington Green Hospital Report* records that the Christmas entertainment for the child patients that year was not the lantern display that Dr Herbert E Friend had given for the previous several years. Due to Dr Friend's absence, a Punch and Judy show provided the entertainment for that year, 'which offered much pleasure to the children'.[783] In the report for the following year, it was noted that a panel had been donated showing a Punch and Judy show taking place in Paddington Green.

Whether the panels were designed for children in the country or the city, nature was clearly believed to be a suitable subject for children, particularly as it was considered to be both beautiful and inspirational. There is no doubt that the wards featuring tile panels were considered to be beautiful. The Lilian Ward at St Thomas' Hospital was described at

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[783] *Paddington Green Children's Hospital Report 1910.*

the time of its opening as 'perhaps the most beautiful children's ward that had ever existed';[784] the Victoria Ward at Bedford General Hospital 'the most beautiful children's ward that we have seen';[785] the children's block at The King Edward Memorial Hospital as, 'in its general attractiveness, is probably unique in the country';[786] whilst the Lewis Carroll Ward at St Mary's Hospital claimed to be, 'one of the finest Children's Wards in any hospital in this country'.[787]

The benefits of being surrounded by beauty extended beyond the psychological. Florence Nightingale realised that 'The effect in sickness of beautiful objects, or variety of objects, and especially of brilliancy of colour is hardly at all appreciated'.[788] Nightingale identified a link between beauty, nature and recovery:

> I have seen, in fevers (and felt, when I was a fever patient myself) the most acute suffering produced from the patient (in a hut) not being able to see out of the window, and the knots in the wood being the only view. I shall never forget the rapture of fever patients over a bunch of bright-coloured flowers. I remember (in my own case) a nosegay of wild flowers being sent me, and from that moment recovery becoming more rapid.
>
> People say the effect is only on the mind. It is no such thing. The effect is on the body, too. Little as we know about the way in which we are affected by form, by colour, and light, we do know this, that they have an actual physical effect.[789]

Nightingale's observations regarding the link between nature, beauty and the psychological and physiological recovery of patients was clearly ahead of its time. Recent research by Richard Ulrich of Texas A&M University has clinically proven the dramatic effects nature can have on a patient. In a paper given to the Arts Council in June 2003,[790] reinforced by clinical research, Ulrich identified that viewing nature or gardens resulted 'in a constellation of positive emotional and physiological

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[784] The Times, 21 June 1901.
[785] Anon, 'The Opening of Bedford Hospital', *The Hospital* 28 June 1899, p. 217.
[786] *Report on the Committee of Management for the Year Ended 31 December 1936*, p. 12.
[787] *St Mary's Hospital Annual Report 1937*, p. 113.
[788] Nightingale, p. 45.
[789] Ibid., p. 46.
[790] Ulrich, Richard, 'The Effects of Healthcare Architecture and Art on Medical Outcomes'. Lecture given to the Arts Council, England, during Architecture Week, 25 June 2003.

changes'.[791] According to his research 'patients exposed to a landscape picture...suffered much less anxiety and pain than persons assigned to any other picture'.[792]

In view of Ulrich's research, the question must surely be asked as to whether the hospital tile panels were early, and almost certainly overlooked, examples of nature being used to psychologically aid the recovery of patients over a hundred years earlier. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that the tile makers were not oblivious to the benefits of the depiction of nature in their tile panels. In a hospital tile booklet, published by the tile manufacturer Doulton in 1904, it was claimed that the tiles had the potential to:

> brighten and cheer the enforced stay of the weary sufferers in the wards, and to bring fresh thoughts of nature and happiness to their tired minds. Who that has seen a Babies' Ward, bright with merry pictures on its glistening walls, with the cheerful nurses eagerly telling some infantile jingle to the tiny patients, can forget the beauty of the picture, and its promises of many a bright recollection for the little ones restored to health?[793]

Nature was not only referred to in the pictures of the tile panels, but also in the tiling around the panels themselves. The lower third of the tiled walls in the children's wards at the King's Fund Memorial Hospital, Bedford General Hospital, Ealing Hospital, St Thomas' Hospital in London and the Royal Berkshire Hospital were all green (Figure 204). It seems highly likely, given the proportion and height of the green tiling, that these were a deliberate attempt to create a sense of horizon and landscape inside the ward.

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[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid.
[793] Doulton, p. 13.

Figure 204: Green tiles in the Edward VII Ward at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading (Source: Author's Photograph)

6.10 Royalty and Hospital Tile Panels

There can be little doubt that nature was intentionally depicted in the tile panels as a means of encouraging the physical and psychological recovery of patients. The way in which nature was used in the tile panels ranged from the simple depiction of gardens to the illustration of outdoor life beyond the confines of the hospital ward. However, nature alone was not the only psychological tool utilised to aide the recovery of patients. In an era when royalty was held in much higher esteem that it is today, royal patronage of hospitals is also an important factor to consider.

Ealing Hospital was formally known as The King Edward Memorial Hospital, a title given to it by royal decree in 1911 by George V in memory of his father, Edward VII.[794] Further 'royal favour'[795] was endowed on the hospital in 1934 when the children's wards, opened in 1915, were named 'The Princess Elizabeth Ward' and 'The Prince Edward of Kent Ward'. In recognition of their royal connections, the tile panels of each ward included a portrait of their respective namesakes (Figures 205 and 206).

Figure 205: Prince Edward of Kent Tile Panel, Ealing Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at Ealing Hospital). This panel was originally situated in 'The Prince Edward of Kent Ward' but is now in a corridor outside of the children's wards at Ealing Hospital.

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[794] Luck, Caroline, 'A Short History of the Hospitals of Ealing', *RCN Bulletin*, No 9, Winter 1985/6, p. 30.
[795] *The King Edward Memorial Hospital Ealing Annual Reports and Accounts 1934*, p. 2.

Figure 206: Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose Tile Panel, Ealing Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph taken at Ealing Hospital). This panel was originally situated in 'The Princess Elizabeth Ward' but is now in a corridor outside of the children's wards at Ealing Hospital

A postcard of the Princess Elizabeth Ward from 1935 (Figure 207) shows that the tile panel featuring Princess Elizabeth was one of a pair sited at the entrance of the Princess Elizabeth Ward. The second panel, on the far right-hand side of this postcard, depicts Princess Elizabeth outside a summerhouse in the same garden featured in the above illustrated tile panel.

Figure 207: Postcard of Princess Elizabeth Ward, King Edward VII Memorial Hospital, Ealing (undated) (Source: Ealing Local History Library). Note the two ceramic tile panels at the far end of the ward above the standard green border representing the horizon.

The royal portrait tile panels at Ealing Hospital (formerly known at The King Edward VII Memorial Hospital) are striking in both their informality and their setting. It could be interpreted that the depiction of the prince and princesses as healthy children in a spring-time garden was a comfort and inspiration to the children who saw them. The sentiment of well children helping those who were ill was certainly advocated in a booklet for child patients at the hospital commemorating the new children's wards. This was given to children, 'as a souvenir of the Hospital in the hope that you will have good health in the future and will always try to help other children who are ill and may be glad to come into the Hospital'.[796]

As well as being beautiful, the illustrations of all of the panels researched could be identified by the children who saw them, whether it be a nursery rhyme, fairy tale, local landmark or the royal family. As such, they were a means of encouraging the child to talk and interact with the staff about the images depicted on the panels. The tiles therefore clearly had an educational value that in many ways echoed Margaret McMillan's technique of developing her pupils' speech by encouraging them to talk about what they could see in the garden, as was explored in the previous chapter.

Given the historic links between religion, philanthropic causes and educating children, it is perhaps somewhat surprising to note that biblical scenes were not a more popular subject for the tile panels. A possible explanation for this may be found in Charles West's 1854 *How to Nurse Sick Children* published three years after the opening of Great Ormond Street Hospital, of which West was founder and senior physician. In this book for nurses, West advocates that 'you must keep the child as quiet as possible'[797] and suggests an effective means of doing this could be by telling the child

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[796] *Nursery Rhyme Book. A Souvenir of the Princess Elizabeth Ward, Ealing Hospital 1934.* It has not been possible to date to source this, but reference is made to it in John Greene's *Brightening the Long Days*, p. 25.
[797] West, p. 40.

> the tales of Goody Two Shoes, or Cinderella, Blue Beard or Beauty and the Beast. I name them because I would not have you think that fairy tales are too foolish to be told now that we have so many good and useful books for children. Grown people need amusement sometime, and children, even when well, cannot always be reading wise and useful and instructive books. The story which teaches nothing wrong, which does not lead a child to think lightly of what is good and right – which, in short, does no harm – is one which you need not fear to tell to children, even though it does not impart any useful knowledge, or convey any important lesson. God Himself has formed this world full not only of useful things, but of things that are beautiful, and which, as far as we can tell, answer no other end than think that they are lovely to gaze upon or sweet to smell, and that they give pleasure to men. Your special business, however, when a child is ill is to give it pleasure, such pleasure as it can partake of; and in exact proportion as you can succeed in this will you in very many circumstances promote the child's recovery.[798]

In West's slim book of only seventy-seven pages, which includes a generous introduction, he dedicates over two and a half pages to the subject of the suitability of fairy tales for children and the need to provide amusement for child patients. *How to Nurse Sick Children* was republished several times,[799] and it does not seem unreasonable to assume that West's book would have had an influential effect on the numerous children's hospitals that were created shortly thereafter. This would surely have extended to the decoration of the wards – which were, as West suggested, for 'amusement', 'beautiful' and 'lovely to gaze upon'.[800] In the Introductory Chapter to this thesis, a shift in the inspiration for child philanthropic causes was identified as moving away from religious instruction and health to being concerned that the child enjoyed their childhood. Although children's hospitals were obviously concerned for the health of the child, it is interesting to note that the decoration of the wards, and West's suggested attitude of the nurses towards their patients, acknowledged the children's need for pleasure. West's recognition of the value of stories that simply entertained children also echoes Carroll's *Alice*, which was published only a decade after West's *How to Nurse Sick Children*. *Alice* was, as has been explored, the first major book for children to focus on entertaining rather than educating children, and it seems entirely appropriate, therefore, that St

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[798] Ibid., pp. 60-2.
[799] *How to Nurse Sick Children* was published in 1854, 1860, 1864 and 1908.
[800] West, p. 61.

Mary's Hospital in London created a Lewis Carroll Ward in 1937 that featured large tile panels illustrating scenes from this book.[801]

No doubt inspired by the writings of Charles West and Florence Nightingale, many of the children's wards of this period followed a formula: a room affording the maximum flow of air and sunlight with access to an outside space and decorated with ceramic tiles. Nowhere is this better summarised than in The King's Fund Miniature Hospital, built in 1933 at the suggestion of the Propaganda Committee of the Fund. The hospital was not a model of an existing hospital, but rather an embodiment of the elements that could be seen in hospitals of that time. It was created as part of The King's Fund's aim of 'making more widely known the great work which hospitals do for the benefit of the community'.[802] More specifically, it was hoped that the miniature hospital, which toured the country and was 'seen by hundreds of thousands of people'[803] would be:

> a source of delight, as well as instruction, to grown-ups and children alike, and will, it is hoped and believed, leave on the minds of those who see it a permanent impression that will result in a more general understanding of the hospitals' manifold functions, and their importance in the life of every individual, and consequently in a deeper sense of personal responsibility for their maintenance.[804]

The model contained a children's ward which 'though the same size as the ward below, is rather differently arranged to suit the needs of childhood'.[805] Comparing the adult ward (Figure 208) with the children's ward (Figure 209), it is apparent that the main difference, as was the

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[801] Greene, pp. 36-37. Greene records that the Lewis Carroll Ward at St Mary's was opened in 1937 by Her Majesty the Queen and Alice Maynell (nee Liddell). Greene was not able to see all of the tiles as they were then obscured by curtain rails and cubicles and have since been boarded up completely. Although the maker is unknown, the tile panels were unique as they featured jigsaw shaped pieces rather than usual square tiles and were also extremely large – some as much as 12 ft x 3ft.

[802] *The King's Fund Miniature Hospital Exhibition Souvenir Brochure* (Country Life, 1933), p. 1.
[803] Prochaska, FK, *Philanthropy and the Hospitals of London – The Kings Fund 1897-1990* (Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 123.
[804] *The King's Fund Miniature Hospital Exhibition Souvenir Brochure*, 1933, pp. 2-3.
[805] Ibid., p. 13.

case at Bedford General Hospital, was the installation of ceramic tile panels.

Figure 208: Adult Ward in the King's Fund Miniature Hospital (Source: Souvenir Brochure)

Figure 209: Children's Ward in the King's Fund Miniature Hospital (Source: Souvenir Brochure)

Like all of the contents of the Miniature Hospital, the tiles were recreated as faithfully as possible. They were actual miniature tiles made by W B Simpson who were the main suppliers of hospital tile panels. In common with many other full-sized hospitals of the time, the tiles depicted nursery rhymes, and once again gardens/landscapes feature throughout. The tile panels were also arranged so that the illusion of a 'horizon' of landscape was created (Figure 210).

Figure 210: Three Sequential Photographs Depicting the Tile Panels in the Children's Ward in the King's Fund Miniature Hospital (Source: Author's Photograph). The Miniature Hospital is now on display in the Wellcome Gallery at the Science Museum in London.

In keeping with many of the other hospitals researched, this exemplary hospital also contained a veranda/solarium to optimise the patients' exposure to sunlight. This circular structure can be seen to the right of the building (Figure 211).

Figure 211: Exterior of King's Fund Miniature Hospital (Source: Souvenir Brochure). The balconies are on the right of the building. Being of circular design they would afford maximum opportunity for exposure to the sun.

6.11 The Decline of Hospital Tile Panels

The number of hospitals that utilised ceramic tile panels attests to their general popularity, and it is evident that the garden was utilised as an image deemed appropriate to aid the recovery of child patients. It is however difficult to establish for certain how the extent to which the ceramic tile panels contributed to the recovery of children. Certainly hospital reports would suggest they did contribute; if not to their recovery then to their comfort, as was advocated by Charles West as early as 1854. The 1938 Hospital Report for Ealing Hospital clearly reinforces this: 'The Committee would like to emphasise that the pictures, which have been paid for so generously by special donations, are a source of constant joy to the little patients'.[806]

This is clearly also an opinion shared by those at Paddington Green Hospital, who observed:

> [The panels] will serve three useful purposes viz: to decorate and brighten the walls of the waiting room: to interest and distract the children from their sufferings: and also (the panels being washable), to reduce the cost of the annual cleaning.[807]

Despite the evident popularity and probably benefits of the hospital tile panels, they were gradually phased out in the late 1930s, primarily as a consequence of the two World Wars. The wars contributed to 'a decline in the income of all voluntary hospitals',[808] which in turn affected the sponsorship available for decorative items such as the tile panels.[809] Many of the factories that produced the tiles were either bombed or unable to re-open following World War II, as much of their machinery was either broken down or melted for the war effort and many of the skilled workers killed. In addition, a heavy tax was implemented on decorative

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[806] *Report of the Committee of Management for the Year Ended 31 December 1936* [Ealing Hospital].
[807] *Paddington Green Children's Hospital Annual Report 1912.*
[808] *Paddington Green Children's Hospital Annual Report 1931,* p. 15.
[809] Evidence for this can be established in that the *Paddington Green Children's Hospital Annual Reports* from 1911-1939 no longer issued their annual appeal requesting sponsors for the tile panels.

tiles after World War II.[810] Not only were no new tile panels being installed, but as time went on, the existing tiles were often removed or destroyed either due to the modernisation of wards and hospitals, or because they were simply not deemed fashionable or politically correct. The tile panels in the Lewis Carroll and Peter Pan wards at St Mary's Hospital, London, were both covered over with plasterboard in the 1970s as the authors, Lewis Carroll and J M Barrie, had both been implicated with paedophilia and were therefore deemed inappropriate subject matters for a children's ward.[811]

Not only have many of the tile panels disappeared, but so too has much of the historical documentation relating to them. A large amount of the archive material for Paddington Green Children's Hospital was lost during the many years that it was left unoccupied pending a decision as to what was to be done with the building.[812] Archive material for St Thomas' and The Waterloo Hospital is held by the London Metropolitan Archives. However, most of the material pertaining exclusively to the tile panels is inexplicably missing. The major suppliers of the tile panels, Doulton, Carter & Co and WB Simpson and Sons, hold little archival information, the latter having lost all of its documents as a result of a bomb destroying their offices during World War II.

John Greene recognised nearly twenty years ago the necessity of documenting the ceramic hospital tile panels. During the intervening years between his research and that for this chapter, several more hospitals that featured tile panels have closed down. Although the tile panels of some hospitals have been rescued and placed in frames, the context in which they were created has inevitably been lost. Removed from the wards for which they were created, the significance of their contents and their original situation is difficult, if not impossible, to fathom

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[810] See Van Lemmen, Hans and Blanchett, Chris, *20th Century Tiles* (Shire, 1999).
[811] Evidence to support this statement was given verbally by Kevin Brown, curator of St Mary's Hospital.
[812] This information was given verbally by Kevin Brown, the archivist of St Mary's and Paddington Green Children's Hospitals.

(Figure 212). Taken out of the wards and separated, the context of the re-sited panels is lost and it is almost impossible to appreciate the ways in which the panels could have once been considered fundamental to the recovery of the patients who once looked upon them.

Figure 212: Re-hanging of Doulton Wall Tiles, Originally in Royal Waterloo Hospital in the North Wing, 8th Floor Lift Lobby, St Thomas' Hospital, c. 1960-1969. (Source: London Metropolitan Archives). Standing alone as a piece of historical art, the context of the panel and its relevance to the recovery of sick children is totally lost.

7.

CONCLUSION

The research presented here has explored the degree to which the garden and nature were utilised to develop children within the park, through literature and illustration, in the open-air school and open-air nursery, as part of the philanthropic provision of after-school gardening clubs and in the decoration of children's hospitals and wards. The research has clearly established, for the first time, how extensively gardens and nature were used between 1850 and 1939 to enable children in London to develop physically and mentally. This concept was first introduced by government and philanthropists through the establishment of public parks in the mid-nineteenth century. Concerned for the future of the nation, they identified that gardens offered a solution to some of the problems experienced by children. The movement reached its height in the early twentieth century when the medical profession, educationalists, writers and artists perceived the huge potential of gardens and nature for the physical and mental development of children. What is striking is how simple was this concept, and yet how imaginatively and innovatively it was developed. This is illustrated through the diversity of each of the chapters within this study.

It becomes evident that there were three main areas in which children were developed; these were psychologically, educationally and physically. The findings of this study have, however, also established an underlying theme which was the gradual introduction and adoption of using gardens as a means of providing children with enjoyment that, in turn, enhanced their development.

Children were developed psychologically in several different areas, which encompassed social skills and spiritual insight. Social skills were developed in the young children at McMillan's open-air nursery through discussing the contents of the garden, whilst considerate social

interaction was encouraged in the allotments provided by the London Children's Gardens Fund and the playgrounds of Victoria Park. Children were offered the opportunity of obtaining spiritual insight through literature such as *The Secret Garden,* which employed the garden as a means of developing an awareness of religion, or the religious undertones of the Temperance Movement, as encouraged by the installation of water fountains such as the Burdett-Coutts fountain at Victoria Park. Within this sphere, young children were also introduced to morals, particularly through the writings of Beatrix Potter.

The open-air school was revolutionary for it established the potential of the garden and nature as a means of educating children in a wide variety of disciplines from mathematics to geography. For younger children, McMillan used the garden to introduce simple educational concepts such as counting, colours, and measurements of length. On a more practical level, children were able to develop gardening skills at the open-air school and from the allotments they tended as part of the LCGF schemes. Furthermore this provided them with an opportunity to secure employment, and this was substantiated through the introduction and provision of gardening exams such as those provided by the RHS.

Gardens and nature were also utilised for the physical development of children and in so doing encouraged an awareness of the benefits of healthy living including abstinence, exercise, eating healthy food, cleanliness and sleep. Open-air living also provided an opportunity for the repair, development and maintenance of the children's physical health, particularly through the practical act of gardening. This research has shown that that the success of projects utilising gardens for children was not merely hypothetical. The scientific approach with which, for example, the LCC undertook its open-air school experiments, offers evidence that a system of education with gardens and nature at its heart had a positive effect on the physical and mental well-being of many London children to such an extent that 'the remarkable part of it is that

there have been no failures at all'.[813] On a more subtle level, images of gardens and nature were used within hospitals to encourage the physical recovery of the sick children who looked upon them. The hospital tiles were also indicative of the medical advances being made in the early twentieth century in the treatment of tuberculosis which revolved around access to fresh air.

The ceramic tile panels also reflected the growing interest during this period of combining pleasure with the psychological, educational and physical development of children. This key concept was advocated by Charles West, the senior physician of Great Ormond Street Hospital, in 1854 when he suggested telling ill children stories for their amusement rather than to teach them a lesson. In the next decade, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* revolutionised children's literature by focusing solely on humouring children and this paved the way for subsequent books such as *The Secret Garden* in which it was possible for the author to both entertain readers whilst at the same time educating them.

Given how extensively and successfully nature and gardens were utilised, it is difficult to appreciate how and why this enlightened approach declined in popularity. Certainly the turning point was World War II and the establishment of the Welfare State in 1948. During the War numerous gardens provided by the London Children's Gardens Fund were either adopted for use as allotments or were destroyed during the heavy bombing experienced across London. Shortly after the War, the introduction of the Welfare State alleviated many of the problems hitherto experienced by inner-city children. Better housing provided adequate ventilation, water and sanitation thus making the urgent necessity for facilities such as those offered at open-air schools, or the McMillan sisters' camp school, redundant. Increasingly gardens and nature were no longer viewed as vital elements of educational provision and so they declined in popularity with educationalists.

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[813] Broughton, p. 18.

However, as was suggested in the Introduction to this study, there has been a resurgence in the perception of the garden as a place in which to educate children, but this movement appears not to be aware of such provision a hundred years ago .

The pop star Kim Wilde is representative of the re-emerging interest. After her marriage, this highly successful rock star's 'immediate priority was to create a garden for [her] unborn children'.[814] Marriage and the prospect of imminent motherhood motivated Wilde towards a 'dream of our own Eden',[815] in which she envisaged her children nurturing and eating home-grown vegetables and all their senses being inspired and delighted through the garden.[816]

Figure 213: Kim Wilde with her daughter, Rose, in the 'Rainbow Garden' at her Hertfordshire home (Source: Wilde, Kim, *Gardening with Children,* p. 34).

Ten years on, Wilde has had two children, has created a family garden at her Hertfordshire, featured in an article on the gardens of the greatest

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[814] Wilde, Kim, *Gardening With Children,* Collins, 2005, p. 9.
[815] Ibid.
[816] Ibid.

plantsmen and women in Britain,[817] and has established a career in the gardening industry that includes the publication of *Gardening with Children* in 2005. In this book, Wilde drew inspiration from her personal experience of gardening with her own children, and claims that gardening is 'a wonderful way to stimulate and excite them, as well as educate them'.[818] From her publication, it is almost certain that Wilde, like the vast majority, is ignorant of the name and work of Margaret McMillan, and yet her words mirror exactly McMillan's basic educational philosophies formulated almost a century before. Wilde is an excellent contemporary example of the way in which educationalists, the government and prominent individuals are realising the potential of the garden to educate children but are unaware that they are repeating history rather then creating it. This illustrates how important and relevant the research presented here is in both recording what was achieved a century ago as well as suggesting to an increasingly interested public what is possible today.

As well as Kim Wilde's book, there are also several organisations that are actively developing the relationship between children and gardens. The Henry Doubleday Research Organisation (HDRO) was established fifty years ago to research and promote organic gardening, farming and food. Today, part of its work is liaising with schools to develop links between organic gardening and the National Curriculum including English, Mathematics, Science, Design Technology, Information Communication Technology, History and Geography: 'Organic gardening activities offer teachers and students innovative and environmentally friendly ways of working across the curriculum'.[819]

The RHS states: 'Education is central to the Society's charitable purpose',[820] and has a number of educational schemes aimed at

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[817] Rattray, Fiona and Bedell, Geraldine, 'Personal Growth', *The Sunday Observer*, 26 June 2005.
[818] Ibid.
[819] www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools_organic_network/nat_curr/keystage_2/intro.htm
[820] www.rhs.org.uk/learning/index.htm

schools, including the 'Flourish' scheme established in 2004 (Figure 214) and the 'Campaign for School Gardening' scheme launched in 2007.

Figure 214: Children taking part in the RHS's 'Flourish' Campaign (Source: RHS Annual Review 2004, p. 11)

In 2004, the RHS was involved with over 3,000 schools and 'at least 120,000 children across the nation'.[821] One of their projects was at Haseltine School in Lewisham, where the playground was transformed in 2005 from tarmac and plastic play equipment into a school garden. The RHS claims that: 'The 'outdoor classroom' provides virtually limitless opportunities to teach the Foundation Stage curriculum. Talk is used as a tool for thought, creating hypotheses, sharing experiences and telling true and imaginary stories. Mathematical concepts are conveyed through counting and spacing seeds and measuring plants as they grow'. [822]

The completion of the research for this thesis has coincided with the RHS's change of access status of its collection of books on children and gardens at their Lindley Library in London from closed to open access.[823]. The collection, of approximately 200 books, is now readily available to

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[821] Anon, 'Learning', *RHS Annual Review 2004*, p. 10.
[822] www.rhs.org.uk/Larning/Education/flourishnews2.htm
[823] Oral sources from the RHS Library staff confirm that this occurred in August 2006.

those who are curious about what has been achieved over the last hundred years and is indicative of the renewed interest in children and gardens. The topics range from school gardens, to horticulture, to more recent books focusing on the family garden,[824] which includes Wilde's *Gardening with Children.* However, there is, as yet, no published work that documents the history of children in gardens, despite the clear evidence presented here that the subject has important potential and much to offer historians, educationalists, the medical profession and parents.

These represent a few of the projects being undertaken today, and the work of these individuals and organisations clearly mirror practices developed over a century ago. However, compared to the sophisticated and innovative ways in which gardens were used in education in the past, their work is less comprehensive. It seems to have little awareness of what was being achieved during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. This thesis provides a body of material which could form the historical background for further research into children's development in relation to gardens and nature. It also provides an entry point for those wishing to explore what was achieved historically with a view to adopting, adapting and developing the theories and practices of the past for the educational and physical development of children today.

The research has proven, beyond any doubt, that gardens were used widely to educate children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Furthermore, despite a decline in popularity in the mid-twentieth century, the potential of the garden as such tool is being recognised again today, albeit in ignorance of what was achieved a century ago. Once again, we are rediscovering that 'The Garden is the place to teach'.[825]

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[824] For example: Keep, Carolyn, J, *The Family Garden* (John Bartholomew & Son Ltd, 1976), Seddon, George, *Planning a Family Garden* (Macdonald & Co, 1982) and Allardice, Pamela, *The Family Garden* (Angus & Robertson, 1995), Guiness, Bunny, *Family Gardens* (David & Charles, 1996), Matthews, Clare, *Great Gardens for Kids* (Hamlyn, 2002),

[825] Parsons, Henry G, *Children's Gardens for Pleasure Health and Education* (Gay & Hancock, 1910), p. 3.

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Maps and Plans

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1891-
1895 Ordnance Survey Map 25" to 1 mile: London 2nd Edition
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1898 Plan of Bedford County Hospital
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1898 Ordnance Survey (2nd Edition)
Sheet 79.2 (Kent). illustrating Maytham Hall, Rolvenden
Scale 25 inches to 1 mile
1909 Detail Plan of Child's Garden at Woodruffe, Worplesdon Hill, Brookwood
by Gertrude Jekyll
(Gertrude Jekyll Collection at University of California, Berkeley; microfiche copy at Royal Institute of British Architects
Ref: File No IV; Folder No 85; Item 1 of 9)
Scale: 1:4
1909 Garden Design for Woodruffe, Worplesdon Hill, Brookwood
by Gertrude Jekyll
(Gertrude Jekyll Collection at University of California, Berkeley; microfiche copy at Royal Institute of British Architects
Ref: File No IV; Folder No 85; Item 9 of 9)
Scale: 1:16
1912-
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1916 Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton
(London Metropolitan Archives)
1929 Plan of Rachel McMillan Training College (Extension)
by Victor Wilkins (FRIBA), London

London Metropolitan Archives (Ref: 175059: Creek Road)
16ft: 1inch

1940 Ordnance Survey Map 25" to 1 mile: London LCC Revised Edition (British Library)

1965 Plan of Rachel McMillan College of Education (Re-modelling existing buildings)
by Messrs Henry Tanner, London
London Metropolitan Archives (Ref: 175059: Creek Road)
Scale: 1/4inch to 1ft

9.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

10.

APPENDIX ONE

	Hospital	Tile Title	Maker	Date	Location	Garden Featured?		If no, reference to a Garden/Landscape?		Garden/Veranda by Ward?	
						Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Bedford General	Cinderella	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes				Garden outside Ward	
2	Bedford General	Whittington and His Cat	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No		No (in a palace room)		
3	Bedford General	House that jack Built	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
4	Bedford General	Goosey Goosey	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
5	Bedford General	Mother Hubard	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No	Yes			
6	Bedford General	Jack Horner	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No	Yes			
7	Bedford General	Ding Dong	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Details not Recorded					
8	Bedford General	Woman and Pig	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
9	Bedford General	Hush a bye Baby	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
10	Bedford General	Dickory Dock	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No	Yes			
11	Bedford General	Humpty Dumpty	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
12	Bedford General	Rick a Cock Horse	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No		No (Street Scene)		
13	Bedford General	See Saw	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
14	Bedford General	Little Bo Peep	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
15	Bedford General	Sing O Song	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
16	Bedford General	Miss Muffet	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					

17	Bedford General	Jack and Jill	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
18	Bedford General	Simple Simon	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
19	Bedford General	Hey Diddle Diddle	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward		No	Yes			
20	Bedford General	Mistress Mary	WB Simpson & Sons	1897/8	Victoria Ward	Yes					
21	Ealing Hosptial	Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward (originally in Princess Elizabeth Ward)	Yes				Sun Lounge Linking two wards andleading onto garden outside ward.	
22	Ealing Hosptial	Little Miss Muffet	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward	Yes					
23	Ealing Hosptial	Tom, Tom	Carters	1934	Donald Bentely Ward (originally in Prince Edward of Kent Ward)	Yes					
24	Ealing Hosptial	Jack & Jill	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward	Yes					
25	Ealing Hosptial	Old Mother Goose	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward		No		No (Flying in Sky)		
26	Ealing Hosptial	Jack Sprat	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward		No		No (Sitting at Table)		
27	Ealing Hosptial	Ride a Cock Horse	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward	Yes					
28	Ealing Hosptial	Little Bo Peep	Carters	1934	Donald Bentley Ward	Yes					
29	Ealing Hosptial	Prince Edward of Kent	Carters	1934	Donald Bentely Ward (originally in Prince Edward of Kent Ward?)	Yes					

30	King's Fund Miniature Hosptial	Jack and Jill	WB Simpson & Sons	1933	Children's Ward	Yes				Veranda	
31	King's Fund Miniature Hosptial	Tom, Tom the Piper's Son	WB Simpson & Sons	1933	Children's Ward	Yes					
32	King's Fund Miniature Hosptial	Ride a Cock Horse	WB Simpson & Sons	1933	Children's Ward	Yes					
33	King's Fund Miniature Hosptial	Little Miss Muffet	WB Simpson & Sons	1933	Children's Ward	Yes					
34	King's Fund Miniature Hosptial	Dick Whittington	WB Simpson & Sons	1933	Children's Ward	Yes					
35	Moorfields Eye Hospital	Jack and Jill	WB Simpson & Sons	1928	Waiting Area (was in Maud Arran Ward of original building)	Yes				Has been suggested there was a garden attached to the former hospital, but there is no evidence for this.	
36	Moorfields Eye Hospital	Sing A Song of Sixpence	WB Simpson & Sons	1928	Waiting Area (was in Maud Arran Ward of original building)		No		No (Sitting at Table)		
37	Moorfields Eye Hospital	Little Jack Horner	WB Simpson & Sons	1928	Waiting Area (was in Maud Arran Ward of original building)		No	Yes			

38	Paddington Green Children's Hospital	Finching Field	Possibly WB Simpson & Sons?	1911 approx	Y	Yes				Hospital overlooked Paddington Green. Also had Balcony.	
39	Paddington Green Children's Hospital	Paddington Green	Possibly WB Simpson & Sons?	1911 approx	Paddington Green Health Centre (formally in Waiting Room of Hospital)	Yes					
40	Paddington Green Children's Hospital	2 further wards of tiles but unable to photograph these as now covered over	Possibly WB Simpson & Sons?	1911 approx	Still in Hospital Building (now Housing Ass Accomodation)						
41	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Dick Whittington	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes				No Records Regard This Found	
42	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Puss in Boots	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
43	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Bringing Home the Milk	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
44	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Bringing Home the Sheep	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
45	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Jack and the Beanstalk	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
46	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Ride a Cock Horse	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
47	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Little Bo Peep	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
48	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Goody Two Shoes	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
49	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Mary Had a Little Lamb	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
50	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Buttercups and Daisies	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					

51	Royal Berkshire Hospital	Where Are you Going My Pretty Maid?	WB Simpson & Sons	1911	King Edward VII Ward	Yes					
52	Royal Gwent Hospital	Ride a Cock Horse	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes				Hospital Belle Vue Park and Hospital Grounds	
53	Royal Gwent Hospital	Hey Diddle Diddle	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
54	Royal Gwent Hospital	Hickory Dickory Dock	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
55	Royal Gwent Hospital	Jack and Jill Went Up a Hill	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
56	Royal Gwent Hospital	Jack Fell Down	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
57	Royal Gwent Hospital	Little Bo Peep	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
58	Royal Gwent Hospital	Baa Baa Black Sheep	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
59	Royal Gwent Hospital	Mary Had a Little Lamb	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
60	Royal Gwent Hospital	Ding Dong	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
61	Royal Gwent Hospital	Who Pulled Him Out, Little Johnny Stout	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					
62	Royal Gwent Hospital	Where Are you Going My Pretty Maid?	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)	Yes					

63	Royal Gwent Hospital	Little Jack Horner	WB Simpson & Sons	1920s	V arious (formally ENT Ward)		No		No (Interior Room)		
64	Royal Waterloo Hospital	Rock a bye Baby	Doulton	1903	Helen Ward (now in St Thomas' Hospital)	Yes				Each Ward had an Open Balcony	
65	Royal Waterloo Hospital	Little Bo Peep has Lost Her Sheep	Doulton	1903	Helen Ward (now in St Thomas' Hospital)	Yes					
66	Royal Waterloo Hospital	Let Them Alone and They'll Come Home	Doulton	1903	Helen Ward (now in St Thomas' Hospital)	Yes					
67	Royal Waterloo Hospital	Red Riding Hood Meets the Wolf	Doulton	1903	Helen Ward (now in St Thomas' Hospital)	Yes					
68	Royal Waterloo Hospital	Red Riding Hood in Her Grandmother's Cottage	Doulton	1903	Helen Ward (now in St Thomas' Hospital)		No		No (In Bedrrom)		
69	St Mary's Hosptial	2 Wards featuring panels of Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan. These are now covered over and so were not able to be photographed.	Carter & Co	1936		?					
70	St Thomas' Hosptial	Turn Again Whittington Thrice Honoured Citizen	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes				Balcony	
71	St Thomas' Hosptial	Dick Whittington Entrusts His Cat to the Captain	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No		No (In Docks)		

72	St Thomas' Hosptial	Dick Whittington Lord Mayor of London	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No		No (Street Scene)		
73	St Thomas' Hosptial	Jack the Giant Killer	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
74	St Thomas' Hosptial	Jack Arrives at ther Giant's Castle	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
75	St Thomas' Hosptial	Jack and Jill Went Up a Hill	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
76	St Thomas' Hosptial	Jack Fell Down	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
77	St Thomas' Hosptial	Little Miss Muffet	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
78	St Thomas' Hosptial	God Morning, Red Riding Hood, said the Wolf	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
79	St Thomas' Hosptial	Red Riding Hood Pulling the Bobbins to Open the Door	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
80	St Thomas' Hosptial	The Rescue of Red Riding Hood	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No		No (in Bedroom)		
81	St Thomas' Hosptial	Little Bo Peep has Lost Her Sheep	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
82	St Thomas' Hosptial	Let Them Alone and They'll Come Home	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)	Yes					
83	St Thomas' Hosptial	Cinderella and her Fairy Godmother	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No		No (Interior Room)		

84	St Thomas' Hosptial	Cinderella Leaving the Ball	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No	Yes			
85	St Thomas' Hosptial	Cinderella Tries on the Glass Slipper	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No		No (Room in Palace)		
86	St Thomas' Hosptial	The Good and Bad Fairies at the Christening of Sleeping Beauty	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No	Yes			
87	St Thomas' Hosptial	The Prince Awakens the Sleeping Beauty	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Lilian Ward)		No	Yes			
88	St Thomas' Hosptial	Little Boy Blue Come Blow Your Horn	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)	Yes					
89	St Thomas' Hosptial	Babes in the Wood	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)	Yes					
90	St Thomas' Hosptial	Puss in Boots Presents a Rabbit to the King	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)		No		No (Room in Palace)		
91	St Thomas' Hosptial	Puss in Boots Watches the King's Guard	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)	Yes					
92	St Thomas' Hosptial	Little Jack Horner	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)		No	Yes			
93	St Thomas' Hosptial	Old King Cole	Doulton	1901	Various (Formally in Seymour Ward)		No		No (Room in Palace)		